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# The Quarterly Journal

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# *The* *Quarterly Journal* OF THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

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## Editor's Note



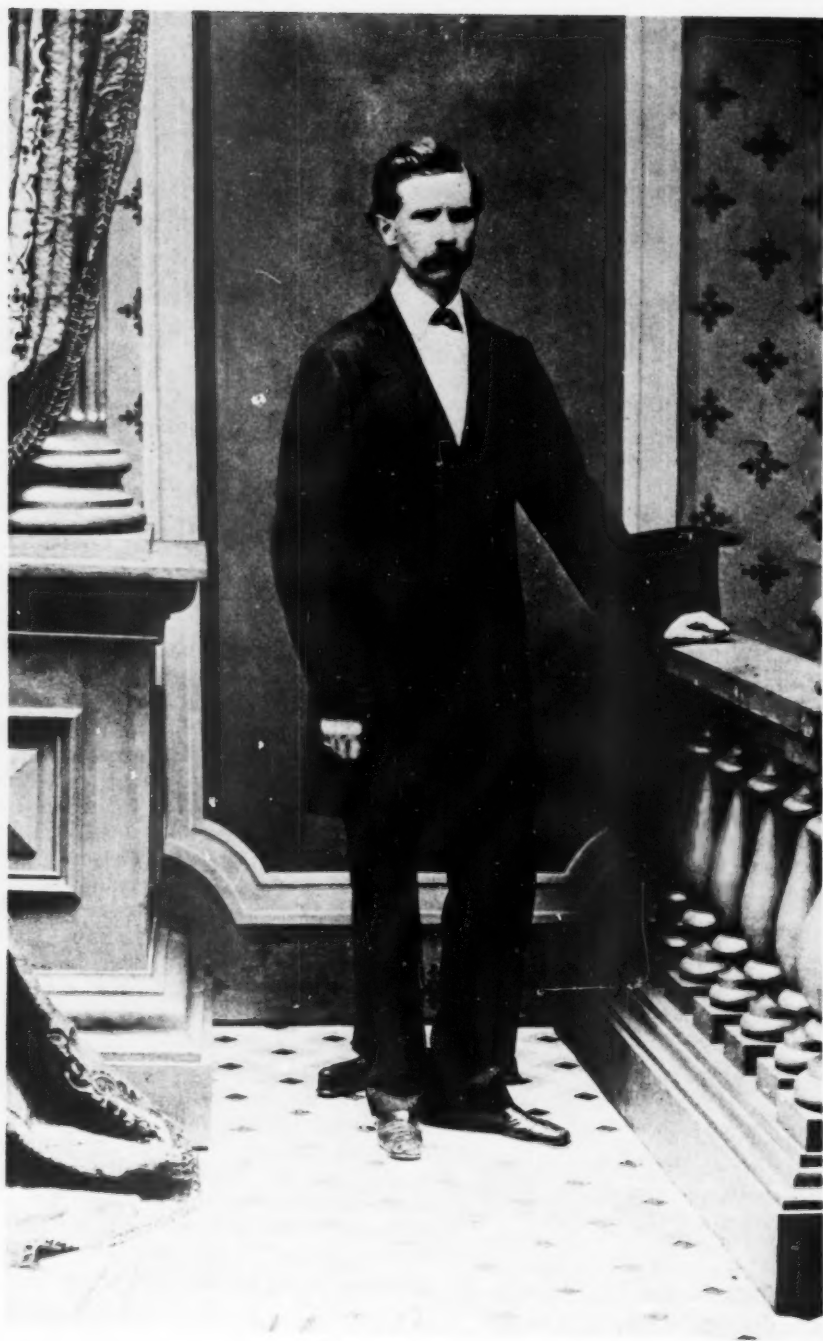
April in Washington is synonymous with cherry blossoms, and their pink buds, even though they may be covered with snow, are a sign to those who live here that it truly must be spring. Busy as he was about public affairs, the farm at Braintree was often in John Adams' thoughts and he also was aware of the turn of the seasons. Two hundred years ago, on June 2, 1776, he wrote to Abigail from Philadelphia:

Yesterday I dined with Captain Richards, the Gentleman who made me the present of the brass Pistolls. We had Cherries, Strawberries and Green Peas in Plenty. The Fruits are three Weeks earlier here than with you, indeed they are a fortnight earlier on the East, than on the West side of Delaware River. We have had green Peas, this Week past, but they were brought over the River from New Jersey to this Market. . . . So much for Peas and Berries.

The staff of the Publications Office is extraordinarily conscious of the letters of John Adams and his contemporaries in the Continental Congress—one of the editors even dreaming about them—because the Library of Congress has in press the first volume of a projected 22- to 25-volume collection of letters of delegates to Congress during the years 1774 to 1789.

Reading other people's mail, although frowned upon in polite circles, becomes acceptable when the writers are long dead and the reading is done in the interests of historical research. And there can be no doubt but what it is an excellent way to discover the real person behind the often grim visage pictured in textbooks. One cannot help but cherish a fondness for men preoccupied with the cares and dangers of incipient rebellion who yet found time to deal with the concerns of family and friends, to savor society, and to appreciate a pretty woman. The reader feels kinship with James Duane who, in the midst of discussions of subjects of "great Magnitude and Difficulty," sends thanks to his father-in-law Robert Livingston, for "the agreeable Intelligence of the safe Arrival and Health of my dearest Polly and our Children. . . . I hope she keeps up her Spirits and uses moderate Exercise; and that my daughter attends to her Improvement: and my son not too troublesome." One sympathizes with Samuel Ward in his plaintive remark in a letter to his brother Henry: "I am obliged to You for the Mention of my Family. I have not heard one

*Continued on page 179*





# John Gould Stephenson

## *Largely Known and Much Liked*

by Constance Carter

The November 12, 1883, front-page obituary in the *Washington Post* for John Gould Stephenson, fifth Librarian of Congress, is headlined, "A Well Known Figure Passes Suddenly Away."<sup>1</sup> The notice states that Dr. Stephenson, a medical examiner in the Pension Office, was born in Illinois about 1825 and had had a splendid army record, being one of three men especially recognized for bravery at the Battle of Gettysburg. Mention is also made of his appointment to the post of Librarian of Congress by President Lincoln and of the fact that he was "very largely known and much liked." The *Evening Star* for the same date reports the sudden death at the age of 58 of medical examiner Dr. J. G. Stephenson at the home of Capt. Albert Grant and gives Stephenson's place of birth as Illinois.<sup>2</sup>

In actuality, John Gould Stephenson was born in Lancaster, N.H., on March 1, 1828, the fourth son of Reuben Stephenson and Mary King Baker. Unpublished records in the Lancaster Historical Society (compiled by Henry O. Kent, editor of the *Coös Republican* and transcribed by Faith Kent for volume 2 of the *History of Lancaster, New Hampshire*) and *Early Settlers of Lancaster, New Hampshire* (compiled by Mrs. J. Wendell Kimball

in 1947 and available in the collections of the New Hampshire Historical Society) list eight children, five boys and three girls, as being born to Reuben and Mary Stephenson.

John Gould Stephenson's great-great-grandparents emigrated from England and settled in Cohasset, Mass. His great-grandfather Capt. Reuben Stephenson was born in Cohasset in 1727.<sup>3</sup> Reuben's son Bryant married Deborah Turner in Scituate, Mass., February 1, 1784.<sup>4</sup> Reuben, the second of their seven children, was the father of John Gould Stephenson, Librarian of Congress, 1861-64.

The Bryant Stephenson family left Massachusetts in the 1790's and, after settling briefly in Lyme, N.H., established residence in Lancaster in 1799.

*Dr. John G. Stephenson, fifth Librarian of Congress. Photographic portrait by L. C. Handy Studios. Prints and Photographs Division. LC-USZ62-57283*

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The Stephenson family was active in Lancaster town and county affairs. John G. Stephenson's grandfather was town moderator in 1803 and served as town clerk from 1808 to 1809. His father, a merchant, served three terms as county coroner, four terms as selectman, and four terms as deputy sheriff and officiated as high sheriff from 1849 to 1855. His civic responsibilities also included the offices of constable and fire warden. John's younger brother Oliver and his uncle Benjamin Stephenson also served as county coroners and as fire wardens. His uncle Turner Stephenson served as town clerk in 1828 and as judge of probate court from 1855 to 1865.<sup>5</sup> An early map depicting Lancaster Village in 1828 in Somers' *History of Lancaster, New Hampshire* (Concord, N.H.: Rumford Press, 1899) shows the location of Reuben Stephenson's store. John's brother Bryant made trips to Boston and Portland once or twice a year to buy goods for their father's dry goods and variety store.<sup>6</sup>

James Brackett, in his *Historical Sketch of Lancaster, New Hampshire*, noted that the town's merchants had always been among its leading citizens.<sup>7</sup> Reuben Stephenson was one of the nine incorporators of Lancaster Academy, chartered by a special act of the legislature, December 24, 1828. The academy opened its first term in "the old flat-roofed court house on the corner of Bridge and Main Streets, with a recent graduate of Dartmouth College as preceptor."<sup>8</sup> Most of its early record books were burned, but a program reprinted in Somers' *History* lists both John and Oliver Stephenson as principals in a program held at the academy on Tuesday evening, November 26, 1844. John played the part of Frontrilles in *Richelieu* and the part of Frank Webber in *College Life*.<sup>9</sup>

J. G. Stephenson continued his education at Dartmouth Medical School<sup>10</sup> and at Castleton Medical College. Frederick C. Waite's *The First Medical College in Vermont, Castleton, 1818-1862*, lists a Joseph G. Stevenson as a member of its fall 1849 graduating class.<sup>11</sup> In a letter dated September 29, 1881, addressed to S. J. Kirkwood, secretary of the interior, Stephenson verifies the fact that he attended Lancaster Academy as well as the Medical Department of Dartmouth College and was awarded his doctorate in medicine on November 23, 1849, from Castleton Medical College.<sup>12</sup> Turner Stephenson, John's uncle, attended

Dartmouth College, as did John's older brother Reuben Henry, who graduated with the class of 1845.<sup>13</sup>

Nine members of the Stephenson family are noted in the 1850 census of Lancaster. John G., at age 22, is listed as a physician; however, it is not known whether he actually practiced medicine in Lancaster. According to Brackett, Lancaster had three physicians in 1850. Yet, Somers does not mention Stephenson in the chapter reviewing the practice of medicine in Lancaster in the 1850's.

In 1858 John G. Stephenson is listed in the first published city directory for Terre Haute, Ind. (p. 94). It is highly probable that Stephenson resided in that city during the decade before the Civil War. Stephenson himself, in 1861, referred to Vigo County as the place "where I have lived and . . . practiced physic & surgery for ten years."<sup>14</sup> The 1860 census for Indiana, taken July 2, 1860, cites J. G. Stephenson, 32, physician, born in New Hampshire, as an inhabitant of ward 1 in Terre Haute.

Stephenson's younger brother Oliver, listed in Lancaster, N.H., in the 1850 census as a farmer, appears as a surveyor in Marshall, Ill., in the 1860 census. The Clark Hotel, in which Stephenson lived during the 10 years he was in Terre Haute, provided daily four-horse hack service to Marshall.<sup>15</sup>

Because of its location on the Wabash River and the Erie Canal, Terre Haute in the 1850's and 1860's was a thriving center of commerce and in need of lawyers, physicians, and other professionals. We have no documentation to account for either John G. Stephenson's migration westward or his choice of Terre Haute as the community in which to practice medicine. We do know that his brothers Charles, Bryant, Reuben, and Oliver also left New Hampshire and sought their fortunes in Arkansas, Iowa, Ohio, and Illinois, respectively.<sup>16</sup>

Stephenson became interested in the Republican party in its beginnings and in 1858 was an "efficient speaker" in Lincoln's behalf during the contest with Douglas.<sup>17</sup> He was one of Lincoln's earliest supporters for the presidential nomination at the Chicago convention,<sup>18</sup> exerting influence upon the Kentucky delegation.<sup>19</sup>

A note in the February 15, 1860, *Wabash Express* indicated that Dr. Stephenson was to address the Opposition Club at its next meeting on Feb-

ruary 20. A notice entitled "Let the Record Be Changed" in the February 22, 1860, issue of the same paper called attention to the fact that "Dr. J. G. Stephenson did not say that all men were created *free* and *equal*. He held just what the writers and signers of the Declaration of Independence held—namely, 'that all men are created equal.'"<sup>20</sup>

An article in the June 6, 1860, *Wabash Express* reported the organization of the Lincoln Club for the purpose of advancing the interests of the Republican party, "promoting the election of the Hon. Abraham Lincoln and Hannibal Hamlin to the offices of President and Vice-President of the United States, and [declaring] the Chicago Platform as our political principles." Dr. J. G. Stephenson was appointed one of five to solicit signers to the constitution of the club in ward 1 of Terre Haute.

John G. Stephenson of Indiana and Gustave Koerner of Illinois are mentioned by Allen Nevins in *The Emergence of Lincoln* as well-informed politicians reporting grassroots feelings about the election of 1860 and on Lincoln's chances of winning it.<sup>21</sup> In a letter dated March 25, 1860, at Terre Haute, Ind., and addressed to the Hon. Lyman Trumbull, Stephenson writes:

Sir—At the risk of trespassing upon your patience, I write again, for the purpose of inquiring how great is the danger Mr. Seward will receive the nomination of the Chicago Convention—If my intrusion needs excuse, please to remember that Mr. Davis misrepresents this district in the House and that Indiana is not represented in the Senate and there be some of us who were engaged in the contest in Illinois two years ago, whose interest has now diminished in that direction—we feel the importance of putting a man like Henry S. Lane in the place of Fitch and of your own return to the Senate (if the people should not now bid you "go up higher") yet we feel that the nomination of Seward would render that almost impossible. Much as we respect Seward, we find that fear of his nomination and the impossibility of his carrying Indiana is paralyzing all our efforts—men who have the means refuse to subscribe the money necessary to carry on the canvass, alledging it to be useless in view of the probability of Mr. Seward's nomination, to expend money in Indiana until, after the convention—and in the meantime, friends of . . . Douglas are gaining strength a part of which they will be able to transfer to the Charlestown nominee if it should not be Douglas. With Lincoln or almost any other western Republican (except Chase) for our Presidential Candidate, we can elect our State ticket and secure a Republican Senator from this State—with Seward this is impossible—and it is much to be feared that the same condition exists in Illinois—

Is there any way in which we can get rid, in any degree,

of the fear of his nomination, that now rests like an incubus upon us? The valuable time between this and the sitting of the Convention, our opponents are able to improve to better advantage than we can do for reasons above stated.

[Galusa Aaron] Grows speech and the vote in the House on the "Homestead Bill" strengthens us—Germany is with us for any Republican outside of Massachusetts (except Bates) and Ireland will help a little.

If your time will permit and you will give me an early reply you will greatly oblige. Your obt. servt.

John G. Stephenson

P.S. Letter lately received from Dr. Payne and others, from Illinois, all concur in the opinion that "we will have a hard road to travel if Chase or Seward is nominated"—I expect to be in Illinois for some time during this canvass.

JGS

If the combination attempted by a part of the Ohio delegates, succeeds in nominating Judge McLean, 'twill help us much in this section, but not so much as would the nomination of Lincoln.<sup>22</sup>

In another letter to Trumbull, dated June 2, 1860, Terre Haute, Ind., Stephenson asks for "a copy of the Report of the Sec'y of the Treasury made Jan. 7–10th 1860, on expense collection revenue—a copy of Trumbull's speech at Chicago, Aug. 7th 1858 with the political record of S. A. Douglass [*sic*] and a copy of the last Appropriations bill." He goes on to say that "we are confident that we can carry Indiana for Lincoln, but we expect a hard fight. I have spent some weeks in Illinois this summer (in Clark and Edgar Counties) the enthusiasm is not as great as I expected."<sup>23</sup>

It is interesting to note that Reinhard Luthin's "Indiana and Lincoln's Rise to the Presidency,"<sup>24</sup> Charles Roll's "Indiana's Part in the Nomination of Abraham Lincoln for President in 1860,"<sup>25</sup> Charles Zimmerman's "The Origin and Rise of the Republican Party in Indiana from 1854 to 1860,"<sup>26</sup> and Russell M. Seeds' *History of the Republican Party of Indiana* (Indianapolis: The Indiana History Co., 1899) make no mention of John G. Stephenson as having had a role in Indiana politics or the formation of the Republican party.

We must assume, nevertheless, that he spent much more of his time practicing politics than medicine. While his business card as physician and surgeon does appear in the *Terre Haute Journal* in 1851, the *Terre Haute City Directory* for 1858, and the *Terre Haute Business Directory* for 1858—



59, his name is not given in the *Transactions* of the State Medical Society of Indiana (Indianapolis: Elder & Harkness, 1861), listing all those who had been members of the society since its organization. Nor is he mentioned in G. W. H. Kemper's *Medical History of the State of Indiana* (Chicago: American Medical Association, 1911), C. N. Combs' *Terre Haute Physicians* (unpublished), or H. C. Bradsby's *History of Vigo County* (Chicago: Nelson, 1891), although the chapter "Medicine" does list physicians of the 1850's. The latter work includes the names of four doctors who in 1861 signed a letter to President Lincoln endorsing Stephenson for the position of Librarian of Congress.<sup>27</sup>

While in Terre Haute, Stephenson was also active in temperance activities. A note in the October 12, 1858, issue of the *Terre-Haute Daily Union* announcing a meeting of the "Terre-Haute Division No. 94 Sons of Temperance" is signed by J. G. Stephenson, Patriarch.

After Lincoln's election, Stephenson decided to use his political connections to obtain a patronage position: that of Librarian of Congress. We can only speculate as to his reasons for choosing to leave Terre Haute and the medical profession. By his own admission, the primary factor appears to have been financial.<sup>28</sup>

His brother Reuben Henry was at this time librarian of the Young Men's Mercantile Library in Cincinnati and his knowledge of the Library of Congress may have influenced John to seek the position. The first letter in his campaign to become Librarian is dated as early as November 27, 1860, when a supporter wrote Lincoln that "Dr. Jno. G. Stephenson of Terre Haute is a candidate of Librarian of Congress, is a true Republican, and will make a faithful and competent officer should he receive the appointment, and I recommend him to your favorable consideration."<sup>29</sup>

During the winter of 1860 and the spring of 1861, a number of individuals wrote to Mr. Lincoln on behalf of the doctor. In representative letters, Stephenson is described as "distinguished for his agreeable manners,"<sup>30</sup> "an earnest and persevering laborer in the cause of Republicanism,"<sup>31</sup> "a learned and urbane gentleman,"<sup>32</sup> "a Republican of the working kind,"<sup>33</sup> and "well-fitted by education, congenial tastes and experiences to discharge the duties of the position for which he

asks."<sup>34</sup> Nine physicians and one dentist, six of whom are listed in the 1858 *Terre Haute City Directory*, wrote in support of Stephenson declaring that they felt him to be "paricularly fitted for the office of Librarian of Congress."<sup>35</sup>

Joseph W. Calvert, a delegate to the Chicago convention from the third district of Kentucky, also wrote to Lincoln in January of 1861 to urge the appointment of Stephenson, stating that in "April last his influence was exerted, to the extent of his ability in . . . setting forth your claims for the nomination in Chicago, and making plain to the delegation of our state, the importance of your nomination."<sup>36</sup> Senator Henry S. Lane of Indiana assured Lincoln that Stephenson's nomination would be more than acceptable. "The Dr. is a gentleman of fine education, pleasing manners and of superior business qualifications & his character for honor and honesty is above all question. His appointment would give great pleasure to the Republicans of his neighborhood and to none more than myself."<sup>37</sup>

Stephenson came to Washington<sup>38</sup> and wrote to President Lincoln, in a letter dated May 7, 1861, urging his own appointment. At the outset, he directed Lincoln's attention to the fact that the near approach of a session of Congress renders it expedient, that the question of a change in the office of "Librarian in the Library of Congress" should be considered without necessary delay;—so that the new incumbent of that office (if there should be one) may so familiarize himself with his position before the meeting of Congress, that by the order and energy of his administration of its affairs, he may bring credit to himself and the power that appoints him—and convince protesting Senators that they erred in their protest against a change in that office.

He then advanced his own claim, stating that his qualifications were "ample" and that he had been "amongst the earliest advocates in Indiana of your nomination to the Presidency by the Republican Party" and "an earnest and continuous laborer in the Cause that triumphed in your election." Stephenson further pointed out that nearly all prominent Republicans in Indiana, including Senator Lane, Governor Morton, and the Hon. Caleb B. Smith, had endorsed him.

The Hon. Wm. P. Dole will be able to inform you that I have made no inconsiderable sacrifice of time and business (and of means to the full extent of my ability) whenever and wherever the friends of our cause have desired, so that I am now in a pecuniary condition that

will greatly be relieved by your granting the application that is made in my behalf.<sup>39</sup>

In a letter to Dr. Davis, dated May 14, 1861, William P. Dole, Lincoln's commissioner of Indian affairs, writes:

I have just left Mr. Lincoln. I found him alone this evening and had a good old fashioned talk as I frequently have and always, when he has leisure . . . Mr. Lincoln is very kind to me and has given me not only what I have asked for myself but so far nearly anything I have asked for my friends . . . and promised me to appoint Dr. Stevenson Congressional Librarian tomorrow. You know that the Dr. is not heavy mettled but he has worked hard for us & is poor and can hand down books to M. C. as well & as gracefully as any one and besides he is a Wabash man and I am for him. *You know I never forget friends.*<sup>40</sup>

It is not known how many rivals Stephenson had for the position of Librarian, but at least three individuals wrote to President Lincoln advocating the candidacy of Hezekiah L. Hosmer of Toledo.<sup>41</sup> Senator James A. Pearce, chairman of the Joint Committee on the Library, wrote to Lincoln on March 8, 1861, recommending the retention of John Silva Meehan as Librarian of Congress:

I have been Chairman of the Library Committee on the part of the Senate for fifteen years and have had therefore opportunity to judge the competing fitness and merits generally of the librarian and his assistants. The latter are appointed by the Librarian. During all that time no change has been made in these appointments, the President having always deferred to the wishes of Congress and neither House having desired any change. The present officers understand and perform all their present duties with singular care, fidelity and ability. They know the Library which now contains nearly 70,000 volumes, can refer . . . to any desired books and understand the character of the collection as no one could do who had not been long engaged in these duties—any new librarian or assistant would require a considerable time to learn what the others already know. . . . They are not politicians but men of books, devoted to the specialty and singularly well qualified in their duties, writing and knowledge, great security of manners and accuracy of habits. I trust they may still be as they heretofore have been, unaffected by political changes, & safe from the influence of political partisanship which has heretofore had no influence in the republic of letters. . . .<sup>42</sup>

Senator Pearce's sentiments were endorsed by fellow committee members William Fessenden of Maine and Jacob Collamer of Vermont.<sup>43</sup> Stephenson's letter to Lincoln of May 7, 1861, indicates that he is aware of the Joint Committee on the Library's attitude toward the appointment of a new Librarian of Congress.

Despite the reservations of these Senators, President Lincoln wrote the State Department for Stephenson's commission,<sup>44</sup> and his appointment bears the date of May 24, 1861.<sup>45</sup> His name was entered on the payroll as Librarian of Congress on June 1, 1861.

Thus, at the age of 33, John Gould Stephenson became the fifth Librarian of Congress. During his first summer in that office he scrutinized his subordinates and determined that a changing of the guard was in order. The ensuing transformation in the staff so alarmed Senator Pearce, chairman of the Joint Committee on the Library, that on September 23, 1861, he wrote to one of his committeemen:

While at Bedford the Librarian wrote me that the service of the Library required the removal of all assistants & Robert Kearin (who was called a messenger though in fact an assistant) except young Meehan in the Law Library. This letter I recd. only about 5 Sept. & soon after I heard of the removal of H. & K., A. was next removed. . . . The Librarian complains of disorder & neglect in the Library which I think be fancies. If there has been anything wrong it has been because the officer's have been unable to compel members to return all the books they have taken out. I think L. is disposed to take too much authority on hand in the purchase of books. He has no right to purchase any book without the order of the committee or chairman wherein however I learn he has sometimes done. . . .<sup>46</sup>

A letter of the same date from President Lincoln to Caleb Smith indicates that some confusion with regard to the Library's present staff did exist: "Has Dr. Stephenson, Congressional Librarian, resigned? Is there any vacancy of Assistant Congressional Librarian?"<sup>47</sup>

Stephenson's 1861 report makes note of the Joint Committee's concern over his clean sweep:

A due respect for the Committee and for their opinions as expressed in their communication touching the subject of removals from office in the Library, impels the Librarian to state that the reasons for the several removals . . . was his conviction, induced by several months of trial and observation, as well as by the facts as to the condition of the Library already recited, of their incapacity for their several posts. No alternative was left him, in carrying out the reforms he had determined to introduce in the Library, but to select new and more competent assistants, holding himself rigidly responsible for their fitness and fidelity. In filling the vacancies created by those removals, he deems it proper to state that he has been guided neither by personal nor political favoritism, but has sought for capacity and industry alone as the indispensable qualifications of his appointees. Whether he



BREAD-OVENS UNDER THE CAPITOL

*The War Department set up bakeries in the basement of the Capitol to help feed the troops stationed in the area. Smoke from the ovens deposited soot "everywhere" throughout the Library. Harper's Pictorial History of the Civil War by Alfred H. Guernsey and Henry M. Alden, vol. 1 (Chicago: Star Publishing Co., 1894). LC-USZ62-57284*

has succeeded in securing them, time and practical conduct of the Library will determine.

As Stephenson hoped, time has indeed shown that at least one of his changes was most fortunate. Stephenson's choice of Ainsworth Rand Spofford as his first assistant has been called his single greatest contribution to the development of the Library of Congress.<sup>48</sup>

Spofford, a good friend of Stephenson's brother Reuben Henry and an admirer of Lincoln, was working in Washington as a war correspondent for the *Cincinnati Daily Commercial*. The Librarian realized that Spofford, a bibliophile, could provide the expertise he himself lacked, and, as Spofford indicated in a letter, the two men understood each



other well. Spofford described the Librarian as a "thorough good fellow—liberal—high-minded—& active—but with no special knowledge of books—& having to put up with most of the former assistant librarians, he called me to his aid for my experience & bibliographic knowledge."<sup>49</sup>

Spofford, in the same letter, describes the Library of Congress in 1862:

The Library of Congress is a collection of 72,000 vols. embracing all departments of literature & science, & is the only national Library at the Capitol. The public uses it precisely as the Astor in N.Y. & members of Congress & of the gov't only draw out books. The Library is a magnificent room in the central front of the Capitol & a great resort. The Librarian (who is appointed directly by the President) receives \$2160 salary. There are three asst. Librarians . . . a messenger . . . and two laborers. . . . The Law Library (which is kept in the old Supreme Court Room) is under the charge of one of the three assistant librarians—who has been many years in that department. The two remaining assistants—whose position is equal in every particular—have charge of the administration of the miscellaneous Library, under the general direction of the Librarian. Practically, the last amounts to little, as Dr. S. between whom & myself there is a thorough good understanding, leaves pretty much all to my management, and I have actually been doing the work of both assistant Librarians ever since I have been here (6 months)—keeping the other assistants in the Catalogue. Now for the duties of the place. They are exceedingly light—consisting of attendance daily from 9 am to 4 or 5 during the sittings of Congress—& 9 to 3 in the vacations which are usually more than half the year. Under no circumstance is the Library open after dark—the room being iron-cased & fire-proof, without gas fixtures. The labor consists of becoming familiar with the contents & location of the various chapters into which books are arranged—supplying the calls of readers, occasionally aiding Members of Congress—writing an occasional letter—keeping a few simple a/c's, & cataloguing the new purchases as they come in. All this divided between three persons—besides the Librarian & the porters. The annual increase in the collection is about 3000 vols.—Congress appropriates every year \$5,000, & \$2,000 for miscellaneous Books.<sup>50</sup>

Spofford makes no mention of the problems caused from the bakeries set up in the basement of the Capitol by the War Department to help feed the troops stationed in the area. The smoke from the ovens deposited soot on the volumes and tables in the Library. Dr. Stephenson vigorously protested the existence of the bakeries in the Capitol building:

I am pained to see the treasure intrusted to my care—a treasure that money cannot replace—receiving great damage from the smoke and soot that penetrate everywhere through that part of the Capitol which is under

my charge, without any means at my command to prevent it. I am now satisfied that there is no remedy, except the removal of the circle of bakeries that hems us in and those directly under the library.<sup>51</sup>

B. B. French, commissioner of public buildings, concurred with Stephenson and suggested that the War Department move the bakeries to the Old Gas House just west of the Capitol.<sup>52</sup> The Senate took cognizance of the nuisance, and Senator Solomon Foot requested that a previous resolution regarding the bakeries be reconsidered.<sup>53</sup> In the House, Representative Charles Russell Train tried to convince that body to agree to the removal of the bakeries from the Capitol, citing the fact that it was impossible to heat the Library of Congress when the bakeries were in operation because the military had built a flue into the flue of the Library furnace.

The wheels of government turned slowly. Nearly a year passed before the offending ovens were finally removed from the basement of the Capitol late in October of 1862, and then only after the intervention of the President himself.<sup>54</sup>

Shortly after the episode of the bakeries, Stephenson urged fireproof rooms for the Library.<sup>55</sup> And soon thereafter the announcement was made that the commissioner of public buildings had recommended an enlargement of the Library of Congress.<sup>56</sup>

Only two reports from the Librarian to the Joint Committee on the Library during the Stephenson years have survived. The first report was filed December 16, 1861, less than six months after Stephenson assumed office. While the 1861 report appears to be in Stephenson's handwriting, it was not signed. David Mearns considered it to be the work of an assistant.<sup>57</sup> John Y. Cole believes the report to have been written by Ainsworth R. Spofford.

Reduced to its essentials, the Library of Congress in 1861 consisted of four rooms, seven people, and 70,000 books. The scarcity of extant records makes it almost impossible to tell how energetically Stephenson entered upon the duties of his new office.<sup>58</sup> Much of the correspondence was signed by his assistants, Spofford and Edward B. Stelle. We do know from the Library's letterbooks and from the 1861 annual report that Stephenson sent medals damaged by the fire of 1851 to the Smithsonian Institution to be repaired,<sup>59</sup> that he reestablished communication with Edward Allen, the Library's

book agent in London,<sup>60</sup> and that he closed the Library from September 9 to October 1, 1861.<sup>61</sup> Stephenson's report of 1861 deplored the lack of modern reference works, the inadequacy of the newspaper file, the accumulation of duplicates, the large number of missing volumes, and the dirty carpet. "That no Encyclopedia, less than twenty years old, is to be found in the Library of Congress is matter of constant surprise and inconvenience to members and others seeking the latest statistical and scientific information," Stephenson noted. Another impediment was the lack of a complete file of some American newspaper "furnishing a full, current history of the times for the last twenty years."

Material available in the National American Woman Suffrage Association Archives and Stephenson's 1861 report to the Joint Committee on the Library indicate that Stephenson had staffing problems.

Spofford, with reference to the dismissal of Assistant Librarian George Blackwell, writes:

The week which has elapsed since Dr. Stephenson's strange & sudden dismissal of George has only confirmed my feeling expressed to you in my last hurried note. It is so far as I can see a most unaccountable freak, absurd or at least unreasonable in its origin, & unjust in its consequences. As George will have fully possessed [?] you of the ostensible grounds of the Dr.'s displeasure, I need not recount them. How much to attribute to his own real feelings of dissatisfaction, & how much to the influence of female back-biting I do not know. But the act of dismissal altho he admitted it to be hasty & "perhaps" unjust, evidence a prejudice in his mind that is probably invincible. . . . The Doctor has shown a weakness of character in the whole matter . . . he has shown himself to me in a new light. I knew that he was a man of strong impulses—somewhat quick, & prone to act upon half views—but I have never before (fortunately) been compelled to see & suffer from an exhibition of his prejudices. He has left me so free to act in all things after my own judgment, & has himself been so prone to consult mine, that his action in this case without reference to me both surprised and pained me.<sup>62</sup>

Stephenson's report to the Joint Committee on the Library, dated January 7, 1863, states that the Library was then the fourth largest in the United States and contained 79,214 volumes. He calculated that the Library's holdings would increase at a rate of six or seven thousand volumes per year. To improve the transfer of books "to and from the houses of members," he asked for authority to "employ an additional messenger and to keep a horse and wagon for the purpose."

Many of the volumes reported as missing dur-

ing the last session had been recovered, but Stephenson was convinced that some would never be returned. Every effort had been made to restrict the loan of books to those government officials specifically authorized by statute, and to a considerable extent, the effort had been successful. Nevertheless, the report continues, "some books are taken from the Library for the use of persons not entitled by law to have them."

On a trial basis, Stephenson had sent his assistant Ainsworth Spofford to New York, Philadelphia, and Boston to purchase books for the collections. The average cost of books purchased by the Library Committee's agent since December 1860 had been, including binding, \$3.25 per volume. Mr. Spofford's journey proved successful. The Library could now purchase books, including the cost of binding and transportation, at \$1.70 per volume, a substantial savings.

Cleanliness, organization, and efficiency were attributes held in high regard by Stephenson; it is not surprising therefore that he noted in the report:

It is with some degree of pride that I ask the attention of the Committee to the present cleanliness and order of the Library—to the ability, energy and fidelity of its subordinate officers—and to the promptness with which the wants of members of Congress are supplied—and that I express my confident expectation of giving the management of this library an efficiency not surpassed anywhere.

James Alfred Pearce, chairman of the Joint Committee on the Library for 17 years, had died on December 20, 1862. Dr. Stephenson quite appropriately concluded his report with a tribute:

The records of the Committee and the history of the Library declare him to have been the friend and guardian of this library. He has selected all or nearly all the books that have been ordered since the fire, has ever manifested a jealous care for its safety, and has had more than any man the control and direction of the library, for which his high literary attainments well fitted him. He has left his mark on the Library ineffaceably. The elegant courtesy of his manners and the kindness of his feeling made his presence in the Library always a pleasure to everyone employed there. By his death the interests of the Library have lost their best advocate, and the officers have lost a valued friend and counsellor.

During the Civil War period, when so many individuals from Indiana were stationed in Washington, the *Indianapolis Journal* ran a series of articles describing the city and its Hoosier inhabitants. Among these is a description of the Librarian and the Library of Congress in 1863.

The Congressional Library is now an interesting institution to a Hoosier, as the Librarian, Colonel J. G. Stephenson, is a Hoosier, formerly of Terre Haute, and the principal assistant is Mr. Spofford, formerly of the *Cincinnati Commercial*, who was made by nature for a librarian. Mr. Stephenson has completely broken up the "old foggy" crust which had hardened and thickened over the Library during the twenty or thirty years of the administration of his predecessor. It is a moving thing now, with a spirit and aim which in a very few years will make it the best library in the nation. He has selected his assistants with a merciless disregard of all considerations but fitness, and has thus obtained the means to add to the Library greatly while administering it satisfactorily. Mr. Spofford, who knows the size, dress, appearance and contents of more books than any twenty of the usual class of erudite men, is always watching for available purchases, in Europe and at home, and has already secured several, of which there are but one or two duplicates at all on this side of the Atlantic.

The Library contains now 82,875 volumes, exclusive of duplicates, public documents, and everything but those works which are usually meant in speaking of a library, and the Law Library contains over 18,000 volumes, arranged as conveniently as the confined quarters assigned them in the building will admit, in a number of small rooms and passages adjacent to the main hall, and in the main hall of the library, but no arrangement can show them to advantage without light and more convenient space. . . .

Mr. Stephenson is working his way as rapidly as possible to complete a convenient arrangement of all the unplaced books, and a general re-arrangement and enlargement of the Library, and when he succeeds, as he surely will, there will be few better in the country.<sup>65</sup>

As the article implies, Stephenson apparently left most of the duties of the Library to his competent assistant Spofford. War raged around the capital, and Stephenson, the doctor, undoubtedly

felt that his own skills could be put to better use in the hospitals and on the battlefields.

On September 23, 1861, in one of his last dispatches to the *Commercial*, Spofford noted Stephenson's medical assistance to the members of the 119th Indiana Regiment:

There is a scarcity of surgeons in the army, and some are graciously volunteering . . . to attend the numerous cases of illness in the army and in hospitals. The 119th Indiana Regiment is the one which has suffered the most hitherto from chills and fever . . . Dr. J. G. Stephenson, late of Terre-Haute, has generously devoted a large share of his time to these sufferers, a temporary hospital for whom has been established in the Patent Office.<sup>66</sup>

Margaret Leech, in her *Reveille in Washington, 1860-1865*, describes the Patent Office Hospital in 1862:

Since the preceding year, the Patent Office had been used as a hospital. One thousand more beds were placed on the second floor and on the gallery which ran around the lofty hall. At night, in the glare of the gaslight, it was a curious scene. Like some new exhibit of ghastliness, waxy faces lay in rows between the shining glass cabinets, filled with curiosities, foreign presents and models of inventions. The nurses' heels clicked on the marble floor, and over all lay the heavy smell of putrefaction and death.<sup>67</sup>

A young soldier, wounded at Gainesville, Va., August 28, 1862, and a patient of Dr. Stephen-

*Army of the Potomac on the march to Chancellorsville, passing along the north bank of the Rappahannock on the way to Kelly Ford, April 30, 1863. Pencil drawing by E. Forbes. Prints and Photographs Division. LC-USZ62-542*



son's, wrote a short note from Washington, D.C., to his parents on September 11, 1862:

I will now try and write you a few lines. You must not expect much. . . . My wound is getting along finely so Dr. Stephenson says. It is still quite painful and still continuous running. I find my expenses are going to be a great deal more than I thought. I have to pay for washing the sheets . . . I have nothing more to say now. Give my love to al

Affectionately yours,  
T. H. Benton<sup>68</sup>

A letter to Mr. Benton's father from an army nurse, Mary Roche, to whose home Benton had been taken, reports the young sergeant's death:

Your son appeared to improve, had good appetite and was very cheerful. On Thursday evening Doctor Stephenson said he was threatened with the inflammation of the lungs from the exposure on the Battlefield. Friday he seemed a little better. On Saturday I began to feel a little more anxious and the Doc staid the most of the day with him . . . Doctor Stephenson dressed his wounds three and four times a day [and] was with him from Saturday afternoon until he died at half-past-one on Sunday noon . . . Doct. Stephenson after his death opened his purse and found \$20. He paid me \$10 . . . his bed had to be changed twice a day . . . the Doctor paid for all his medicine. . . .<sup>69</sup>

In addition to tending the Civil War wounded and "giving to the management of the Library an efficiency not surpassed anywhere,"<sup>68</sup> Stephenson found time to write to Gov. Oliver Morton on behalf of Captain Brasher of the 14th Regiment Indiana Volunteers, who was wounded by a musket shot at the Battle of Antietam:

I have know Capt. Brasher for ten years and have no hesitation in saying that his past character and habits and his distinguished gallantry and discretion in this war entitle him to consideration at the hands of the Executive of our State.<sup>69</sup>

It is probable that the governor heeded Stephenson's request, for he served as a member of the governor's military staff with the rank of colonel. The *Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Indiana, 1861-1865* lists Jno. D. Stephenson as a special aide-de-camp with assignment to the relief soldiers of the Army of the Potomac.<sup>70</sup>

The unpublished notes in the Lancaster Historical Society corroborate the fact that Stephenson was active in politics in Indiana and Illinois, that he served on the staff of Governor Morton with the rank of colonel, and that he carried important dispatches to the commanding officer of the Army of the Potomac before the Battle of Gettysburg.

Stephenson, in his resume, states:

I never enlisted, and never was commissioned in the military service of the United States, but during a part of 1861 served as acting naval surgeon of the 19th Ind. Vols. and in 1863 served with the Army of the Potomac as a volunteer aid de camp with my Militia rank of Colonel, participating in the battles of Fitzhugh Crossing, Chancellorsville, and Gettysburg.<sup>71</sup>

The part he played in the first two battles is not known, although notes in the Lancaster Historical Society's collections indicate that he was "entrusted with important dispatches" on more than one occasion. The society's material includes the fact that "Stephenson was one of three persons recommended by General Doubleday for bravery and promotion." Maj. Gen. Abner Doubleday, commanding the Third Division, First Army Corps, stated in his report: "Colonel Stephenson, Librarian of Congress, acted as a volunteer aide to General Meredith. He exposed himself freely on all occasions, and rendered many valuable services." <sup>72</sup> That Stephenson had been in the thick of the fighting during the Battle of Gettysburg may be presumed from the fact that the First Brigade of the First Division, commanded by General Meredith, suffered 1,153 casualties.<sup>73</sup>

In *The Iron Brigade at Gettysburg*, William Dudley writes, "Special mention is made of the gallant service of Capt. J. D. Wood, A.A.G., and Col. J. G. Stephenson, a volunteer aid, and Lieut. Samuel Meredith, A.D.C., all of whom rendered brilliant and effective services throughout the day." <sup>74</sup>

Brig. Gen. Solomon Meredith wrote President Lincoln on behalf of Colonel Stephenson within a week of the Battle of Gettysburg:

To his Excellency  
Abraham Lincoln  
President of the U.S.  
Sir:

This will be presented by Col. John G. Stephenson, Congressional Librarian, who has been serving on my Staff as Volunteer Aid, for the past two months. His services have been valuable in the field and his desire to do all in his power for his country in this her hour of need is great.

If there is any position you could give him where he could render service in the field it would be worthily bestowed.

I am Sir  
Very Respectfully  
Your Obt Svt.  
S. Meredith  
Brig. Gen'l.<sup>75</sup>



Hd Qu 1st Brig 1st Div 1st Army Corps  
June 24th 1863

To his Excellency

Abraham Lincoln

President of the U.S.

Sir

This will be presented  
by Lieut John G. Stephenson, Congressional Librarian, who  
has been serving on my Staff as Volunteer aid. for the past  
two months. His services have been valuable in the field  
and his desire to do all in his power for his country  
in this hour of need is great.

If there is any position you could give him where  
he could render service in the field it would be most  
highly appreciated.

I am Sir

Very Respectfully

Your Obedt Servt

S Murdick

Brig Genl.

It is interesting to note that John G. Stephenson's name does not appear in the definitive work chronicling the medical history of the Civil War, Abner Doubleday's own major book on Gettysburg, or Alan Nolan's *History of the Iron Brigade* (New York: Macmillan, 1961).

On December 22, 1864, John G. Stephenson submitted his resignation as Librarian, effective December 31, and Ainsworth Rand Spofford was commissioned as of this date.<sup>76</sup> The reasons behind his resignation are cloudy. It has been written that Stephenson was a participant in "speculations created by the War,"<sup>77</sup> but no details have been found, except for a possible connection with an act of 1872 compensating Edward G. Allen, the Library's London agent, for the sum of \$1,480, "of which sum he was unjustly defrauded by the conduct of the Librarian in the year eighteen hundred and sixty-three."<sup>78</sup>

The Lancaster, N.H., Historical Society's records indicate that Stephenson went south after resigning the position of Librarian. There is also a note in the society's files that his assistant Spofford assumed the office.

In a letter dated April 8, 1880, addressed to the secretary of war and signed by A. Grant, the individual in whose home John G. Stephenson would later die, a statement is made to the effect that Stephenson would have received another patronage position had Lincoln lived but a month or two longer:

My dear Sir:

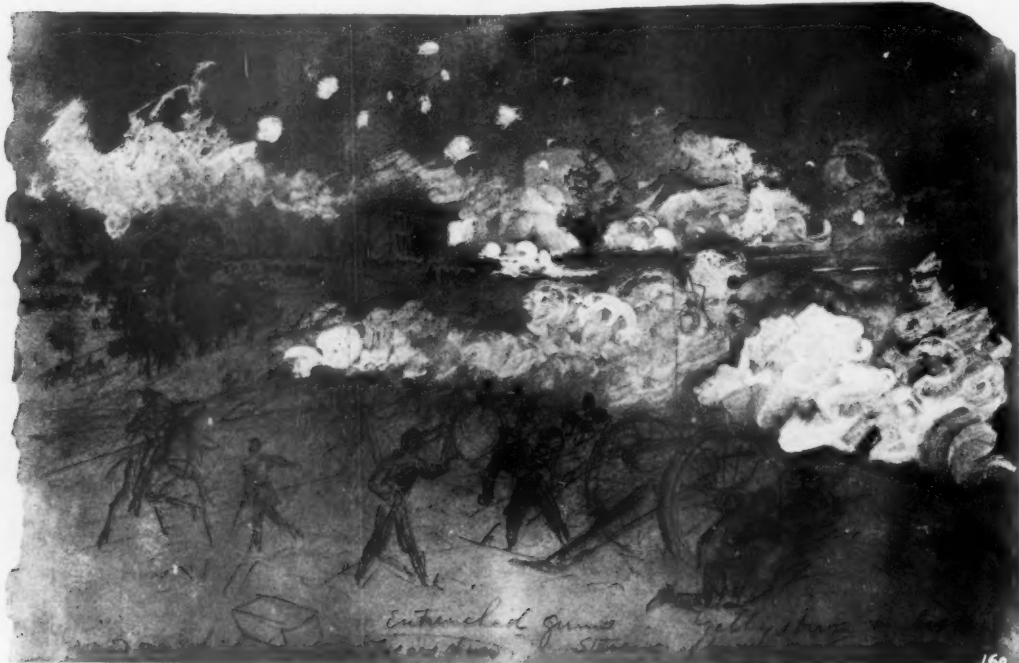
Dr. Jno G. Stephenson, whom you doubtless recollect, desires to be appointed a clerk in the office of the Surgeon General.

His learning, mature years and business experience eminently well qualify him for the place he seeks.

His services to the soldiers during the rebellion (when he was Librarian of Congress) and his unwavering devotion to the Republican party since its first organization, entitle him to some consideration. If Mr. Lincoln had lived another month, Dr. S. would have been amply provided for.

I shall esteem it a personal favor if you will give him the position he asks for.

*Cemetery Hill previous to Pickett's charge at the Battle of Gettysburg, July 3, 1863. Drawing by A. R. Waud. Prints and Photographs Division. LC-USZ62-160*



I will take the liberty of calling on you within a few days.<sup>79</sup>

We can only assume, given the contents of this letter, that Stephenson had been engaged in some kind of activity of direct benefit to the Republican party and Mr. Lincoln. The doctor was given the position he wanted.

Stephenson states in a letter dated September 29, 1881, addressed to the Hon. S. J. Kirkwood, secretary of the interior: "I was . . . Librarian of Congress from June 1861 to Jan. 1865, when I resigned that office; from that time to Sept. 1880, was employed in various capacities as a clerk not in the service of the United States; was a clerk in the Record and Pension Division of the Surgeon General Office from Sept. 1, 1880 to March 30, 1881, when I was discharged—cause not stated."<sup>80</sup>

Stephenson gives no specific information as to his whereabouts during the years 1865 to 1880. The District of Columbia census for 1870 lists Stephenson in ward 4; *Boyd's Directory of Washington, Georgetown, and Alexandria for 1871* lists John G. Stephenson, physician, as residing at 306 4½ Street, N.W.<sup>81</sup> The obituary notice for his older brother, Reuben Henry Stephenson, states that Bryant, John, and Oliver were all living "in the far west" at the time of Reuben Henry's death in January 1881.<sup>82</sup>

It does not appear that Stephenson was, as his obituary notice reads, "very largely known." *The Dictionary of American Biography* does not mention him among the Americans who achieved fame. The historical societies of New Hampshire, Indiana, and the District of Columbia contain virtually no material on Stephenson, either as a politician, physician, or Librarian of Congress. The Indiana State Library has one reference to him in its card file; this is to Johnston's one-page resume of the Stephenson years.<sup>83</sup> The Indiana State Archives has one Stephenson letter in its Morton Collection. The Lancaster Historical Society and the National Archives have but meager offerings. Books on life in Washington during the Civil War and local, county, and state histories of the places in which Stephenson lived and worked yield almost no information about him.

Since his appointment to the post of Librarian of Congress was "one of the minor spoils which accrued to the Republican Party by its capture of the national administration in the election of

1860,"<sup>84</sup> it seems reasonable to assume that his name would appear in major, or at least regional, works on Republican politics before the election. Allan Nevins' reference to Stephenson as a "well-informed politician,"<sup>85</sup> Stephenson's letter of March 25, 1860, to Lyman Trumbull,<sup>86</sup> and the few letters to Lincoln, already noted, are the only evidence we have that Stephenson was actively engaged in partisan politics. Even his nephew, Nathaniel Wright Stephenson, a Lincoln scholar and Civil War historian, makes no mention of his uncle, a Lincoln appointee, in his writings.

While he may not have been "very largely known," we do have some evidence that he was "much liked." A letter from W. T. Dennis, appearing in the *Quaker City Telegram*, reads:

Our Indiana citizens are nobly devoting themselves to the work of mercy, many giving their whole time and their means as far as they are able. Dr. John G. Stephenson, librarian to Congress, has devoted his whole time and his fine professional skill to the relief not only of our own sick and wounded, but to those of other States. As an evidence of their appreciation of his services, several wounded officers and privates of New York regiments, whom he attended, have presented him with a beautiful set of sleeve buttons and shirt studs elegantly set with diamonds.<sup>87</sup>

Another letter, this one in the *Indianapolis Journal*, praises Stephenson's courage and concern at Gettysburg: "Col. Stephenson, who all the day had been serving in the hottest of the fight as aid to Meredith, relieved a wounded Colonel, and strove to rally his regiment."<sup>88</sup>

Records in the National Archives show that Stephenson consulted a physician as early as August 1883, complaining of an inability to sleep for days at a time. As of October 16, 1883, he was too ill to continue his work as medical examiner in the Pension Office, a position he had held since July of that year.<sup>89</sup> The *Washington Post* obituary makes note of the fact that "he had been ailing for a month and on Friday called Capt. Grant, who invited him to stay at the house for a day or two until he felt better. . . . his death was so unexpected that Dr. Bliss preferred an autopsy should be made, while believing it resulted from heart disease."<sup>90</sup>

Resident members of the old First Army Corps met at the office of Colonel Dudley on November 13 and passed a resolution expressing their regret at the death of Dr. J. G. Stephenson, who had served with them in the corps during the war.

A committee was appointed to make arrangements for the funeral, which took place in the Metropolitan Presbyterian Church on Capitol Hill, November 14, 1883.<sup>91</sup>

John Gould Stephenson, physician, politician, and Librarian of Congress from 1861 to 1864, lies buried in an unmarked grave in Washington's Congressional Cemetery.<sup>92</sup>

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> *Washington Post*, November 12, 1883, p. 1.
- <sup>2</sup> *Washington Evening Star*, November 12, 1883, p. 1.
- <sup>3</sup> Cohasset, Mass., *Vital Records of Cohasset, Massachusetts to the Year 1850* (Boston: Wright & Potter Printing Company, 1916), p. 98.
- <sup>4</sup> Scituate, Mass., *Vital Records of Scituate, Massachusetts, to the Year 1850* (Boston: New England Historic Genealogical Society, 1909), 2:266.
- <sup>5</sup> Amos Newton Somers, *History of Lancaster, New Hampshire* (Concord, N.H.: Rumford Press, 1899), pp. 260, 406-7, 464, 535, 537-39.
- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 129, 416.
- <sup>7</sup> James Brackett, *Historical Sketch of Lancaster, New Hampshire* (n.p., 1876?), p. 21.
- <sup>8</sup> Somers, p. 167.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 418-19.
- <sup>10</sup> Dartmouth College, *Dartmouth College and Associated Schools: General Catalogue, 1769-1940* (Hanover, N.H., 1940), pp. 908-9.
- <sup>11</sup> Frederick C. Waite, *The First Medical College in Vermont, Castleton, 1818-1862* (Montpelier: Vermont Historical Society, 1949), p. 231.
- <sup>12</sup> Personnel File of John G. Stephenson, December 1881, Record Group 84, Office of the Secretary of the Interior, 2712-1881, National Archives and Records Service.
- <sup>13</sup> Dartmouth College, *General Catalogue of Dartmouth College and the Associated Schools, 1769-1900* (Hanover, N.H., 1900), p. 200.
- <sup>14</sup> Stephenson to Lincoln, May 7, 1861, Lincoln Collection, Library of Congress, XLIV, 9790-91.
- <sup>15</sup> *Terre Haute City Directory and Business Mirror, for 1858* (Terre Haute, Ind.: R. H. Simpson, 1858), p. 81.
- <sup>16</sup> Unpublished records in the Lancaster, N.H., Historical Society supplied by Mrs. Jane Hunter and Mrs. Cecile Costine.
- <sup>17</sup> William P. Dole to Lincoln, March 16, 1861, Lincoln Collection, XXXVII, 8185.
- <sup>18</sup> Thomas H. Nelson to Lincoln, March 13, 1861, Lincoln Collection, XXXVII, 8072.
- <sup>19</sup> J. W. Calvert to Lincoln, January 4, 1861, Lincoln Collection, XXV, 5723.
- <sup>20</sup> *Terre Haute Wabash Express*, February 22, 1860.
- <sup>21</sup> Allan Nevins, *The Emergence of Lincoln*, vol. 2, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950), p. 239.
- <sup>22</sup> Stephenson to Lyman Trumbull, March 25, 1860, Trumbull Papers, LC.
- <sup>23</sup> Stephenson to Lyman Trumbull, June 2, 1860, Trumbull Papers.
- <sup>24</sup> Reinhard H. Luthin, "Indiana and Lincoln's Rise to the Presidency," *Indiana Magazine of History* 38 (December 1942): 385-402.
- <sup>25</sup> Charles Roll, "Indiana's Part in the Nomination of Abraham Lincoln for President in 1860," *Indiana Magazine of History* 25 (January 1929): 1-13.
- <sup>26</sup> Charles Zimmerman, "The Origin and Rise of the Republican Party in Indiana from 1854 to 1860," *Indiana Magazine of History* 13 (September 1917): 211-69; 13 (December 1917): 349-412.
- <sup>27</sup> Letters to Lincoln, March 1861, Lincoln Collection, XXXIX, 8601.
- <sup>28</sup> Stephenson to Lincoln.
- <sup>29</sup> S. B. Gookin to Lincoln, November 27, 1860, Lincoln Collection, XXI, 4672.
- <sup>30</sup> W. Gilpin to Lincoln, March 30, 1861, Lincoln Collection, XXXIX, 8499.
- <sup>31</sup> E. B. Allen to Lincoln, February 18, 1861, Lincoln Collection, XXXIII, 7401.
- <sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>33</sup> James H. McNeely, editor of the *Evansville Journal*, to Lincoln, April 3, 1861, Lincoln Collection, XL, 8727.
- <sup>34</sup> Gilpin to Lincoln.
- <sup>35</sup> Letters to Lincoln, March 1861.
- <sup>36</sup> Calvert to Lincoln.
- <sup>37</sup> Henry S. Lane to Lincoln, May 7, 1861, Lincoln Collection, XXXV, 7825.
- <sup>38</sup> Richard C. Wood, "Librarian-in-Arms: The Career of John G. Stephenson," *Library Quarterly* 19 (October 1949): 263-69.
- <sup>39</sup> Stephenson to Lincoln.
- <sup>40</sup> William P. Dole to Dr. Davis, May 14, 1861, Dole Collection, Indiana Historical Society Library.
- <sup>41</sup> Richard Mott to Lincoln, March 11, 1861, Lincoln Collection, XXVI, 7981; Kinsley Bingham to Lincoln, March 30, 1861, XXXIX, 8487; R. G. Corwin to Lincoln, March 9, 1861, XXXVI, 7932.
- <sup>42</sup> Senator James A. Pearce to Lincoln, March 8, 1861, Lincoln Collection, XXXV, 7914-17.
- <sup>43</sup> Jacob Collamer to Charles Lanman, November 17, 1864, Lanman Papers, LC.
- <sup>44</sup> Lincoln to Secretary of State, May 23, 1861, Department of State Appointment Papers, National Archives.
- <sup>45</sup> List of Librarians of Congress, Department of State



Miscellaneous Officers' Letterbook, no. 1, p. 164, National Archives.

<sup>48</sup> J. A. Pearce to William P. Fessenden, September 25, 1861, Correspondence of William P. Fessenden, LC, vol. 2, March 17, 1861–November 2, 1863.

<sup>49</sup> Roy P. Basler, ed., *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, vol. 4 (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1953), p. 537.

<sup>50</sup> Lucy Salamanca, *Fortress of Freedom; the Story of the Library of Congress* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1942), p. 197.

<sup>51</sup> Ainsworth R. Spofford to Henry B. Blackwell, May 2, 1862, National American Woman Suffrage Association Archives, LC.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> *Senate Misc. Doc. No. 8* (37th Cong., 2d sess., ser. 1124), p. 2.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., pp. 2–3.

<sup>55</sup> U.S. Congress, *Congressional Globe* (February 3, 1862): 607.

<sup>56</sup> B. B. French to E. M. Stanton, October 23, 1862, Commissioner of Public Buildings, National Archives.

<sup>57</sup> Stephenson to French, November 20, 1862, Librarians' Letterbooks, LC.

<sup>58</sup> *National Intelligencer*, January 29, 1863.

<sup>59</sup> David C. Mearns, *The Story up to Now; the Library of Congress, 1800–1946* (Washington: Library of Congress, 1947), p. 71.

<sup>60</sup> Wood, p. 265. According to Wood, only one letter received in the period 1861–64 is extant in the Library of Congress Archives.

<sup>61</sup> Stephenson to Joseph Henry, August 6, 1861, Librarians' Letterbooks.

<sup>62</sup> Stephenson to Edward Allen, August 20, 1861, Librarians' Letterbooks.

<sup>63</sup> *National Intelligencer*, September 26, 1861.

<sup>64</sup> Ainsworth Spofford to Henry B. Blackwell, September 22, 1862, National American Woman Suffrage Association Archives.

<sup>65</sup> *Indianapolis Journal*, November 28, 1863, p. 2. Material from this newspaper and from the *Quaker City Telegram* was brought to my attention by A. D. Gaff, who is writing a history of Company B, 19th Indiana Regiment.

<sup>66</sup> *Cincinnati Daily Commercial*, September 23, 1861, p. 1.

<sup>67</sup> Margaret Leech, *Reveille in Washington, 1860–1865* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1941), p. 206.

<sup>68</sup> T. H. Benton to his parents, September 11, 1862, Indiana Historical Society Library. This letter and the following one were both brought to my attention by Tom

Rumer, Reference Librarian, Indiana Historical Society Library.

<sup>69</sup> Mary Roche to T. H. Benton's parents, October 20, 1862, Indiana Historical Society Library.

<sup>70</sup> Annual Report to the Joint Committee on the Library, January 7, 1863.

<sup>71</sup> Stephenson to Oliver Morton, December 21, 1862, Archives Division, Morton Collection, Indiana State Library.

<sup>72</sup> Indiana. Adjutant-General's Office, *Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Indiana, 1861–1865*, vol. 2 (Indianapolis: W. R. Holloway, 1865), p. xi.

<sup>73</sup> Personnel Records of John G. Stephenson.

<sup>74</sup> U.S. War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, series 1, XXVII, pt. 1, p. 256.

<sup>75</sup> Mearns, p. 71.

<sup>76</sup> William W. Dudley, *The Iron Brigade at Gettysburg: Official Report of the Part Borne by the 1st Brigade, 1st Division, 1st Army Corps, Army of the Potomac, in Action at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, July 1st, 2d, and 3d, 1863* (Cincinnati: Privately Printed, 1879), p. 13.

<sup>77</sup> Solomon to Meredith Lincoln, Record Group 94, 519–S–CB–1863, National Archives.

<sup>78</sup> List of Librarians of Congress, p. 164.

<sup>79</sup> William Dawson Johnston, *History of the Library of Congress*, vol. 1 (Washington: Library of Congress, 1904), p. 383.

<sup>80</sup> *Statutes at Large*, XVII, p. 686.

<sup>81</sup> A. Grant to Alex Ramsey. Application file of John G. Stephenson, Record Group 107, War Department, National Archives.

<sup>82</sup> Personnel File of John G. Stephenson.

<sup>83</sup> William Andrew Boyd, comp., *Boyd's Directory of Washington, Georgetown, and Alexandria for 1871* (Washington: R. L. Polk & Co., 1871), p. 328.

<sup>84</sup> *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, January 14, 1881, p. 5.

<sup>85</sup> Johnston, p. 383.

<sup>86</sup> Mearns, p. 82.

<sup>87</sup> Nevins, p. 239.

<sup>88</sup> Stephenson to Trumbull, March 25, 1860.

<sup>89</sup> Richmond, Ind. *Quaker City Telegram*, September 29, 1862, p. 2.

<sup>90</sup> Chaplain Thomas Barnett in the *Indianapolis Journal*, July 9, 1863, p. 2.

<sup>91</sup> Personnel File of John G. Stephenson.

<sup>92</sup> *Washington Post*, November 12, 1883, p. 1.

<sup>93</sup> *Washington Evening Star*, November 14, 1883, p. 6.

<sup>94</sup> Grave No. 244, Range 6, Records of the Congressional Cemetery.





# Ainsworth Rand Spofford

*The Valiant and Persistent*

*Librarian of Congress*

by John Y. Cole

The transformation of the Library of Congress from a legislative library into an institution of national significance was, in large measure, the achievement of one individual: Ainsworth Rand Spofford, Librarian of Congress from 1864 to 1897. From the day he started work at the Library, Spofford assumed that it *was* the national library, and he spent the rest of his life making that conviction a reality. In the process, he provided his successors at the Library of Congress with the comprehensive collections and spacious building necessary for the development of a truly modern American national library.<sup>1</sup>

Spofford's 47-year career at the Library of Congress was a step-by-step progression toward his goal. As Assistant Librarian from 1861 to 1864, when the Library of Congress was a small legislative library in the west front of the U.S. Capitol, he carefully prepared the way for its future growth. His appointment as Librarian of Congress by President Abraham Lincoln on December 31, 1864, inaugurated a six-year period of unprecedented expansion that resulted not only in the library's becoming the largest library in the United States but also in its emerging into a position of national preeminence. Spofford's most important

collection-building achievement was the centralization of all U.S. copyright activities at the Library of Congress, which brought into the Library two copies of each copyrighted book, pamphlet, map, photograph, print, and piece of music. Moreover, the 1870 copyright law eventually made a separate building a necessity, even though it took 26 years of pleading and planning by Spofford before it was completed. That Italian Renaissance structure, located across the east plaza from the Capitol, is truly the capstone of Spofford's effort, for its monumental nature permanently ensured the Library's national role. On July 1, 1897, four months before the new building was opened, the 72-year-old Librarian willingly stepped down to assume the duties of Chief Assistant Librarian. He served in that post until his death in 1908.

Ainsworth Spofford was a self-educated, old-fashioned bookman whose personal and profession-

*Spofford posed for this photograph in 1849, shortly after he had helped organize the Literary Club of Cincinnati. Courtesy of the Literary Club of Cincinnati.*

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al interests were inseparable. His reputation as a reliable source of information for both official and unofficial Washington made him a well-known figure in the nation's capital for nearly half a century and greatly enhanced his national library efforts. Industrious and fair-minded, he was respected by all, even though his formal and somewhat abstract manner was not always understood or appreciated. To the dismay of many, he was also an exceedingly stubborn individual. Spofford's successes, however, can be attributed to the same single-mindedness that occasionally disturbed his contemporaries. He never lost sight of his principal purpose—the transformation of the Library of Congress into the American national library—and he was a shrewd politician and propagandizer in the pursuit of that goal.

Spofford was a prolific essayist, editor, and compiler; in truth, almost a compulsive popularizer of knowledge. Since he felt that a librarian should be an educator, the primary purpose of his many compilations was to select and summarize what he considered to be the best or most useful information, whether it be statistical facts or literary essays. His annual *American Almanac and Treasury of Facts, Statistical, Financial, and Political* (12 vols.; New York and Washington: American News Company, 1878–89) is one example. Other typical, multivolume compilations which he edited include *The Library of Choice Literature* (8 vols.; Philadelphia: Gebbie & Co., 1882; 2d ed., 10 vols., 1888) and *The Library of Historic Characters and Famous Events of All Nations and All Ages* (10 vols.; Philadelphia: F. Finley & Co., 1894–95). In the last decades of the 19th century Spofford became so well known as a compiler and official source that in 1900 his principal publisher, Gebbie & Co. of Philadelphia, promoted a standard Rand McNally atlas under the title *Spofford's Cabinet Cyclopaedia Atlas of the World*.<sup>2</sup>

Throughout his life, Spofford actively participated in local cultural societies. In 1849, as a young man, he was the principal organizer of the Literary Club of Cincinnati, which is still in existence. In later years he called his 12 years of membership in the Literary Club “the most valuable part of my education.”<sup>3</sup> In the capital, he frequently presented papers before the Washington Literary Society and played a major role in the founding of four important organizations: the Columbia

Historical Society and the District of Columbia Library Association in 1894, the Public Library of the District of Columbia in 1896, and the library school at Columbian College (now the George Washington University) in 1897. He was a principal officer in the literary, historical, and library associations, a member of the board of trustees of the public library, and the director of the library school.

Spofford's personal interests were perhaps most accurately described in the formidable title of his only full-length monograph: *A Book for All Readers, Designed as an Aid to the Collection, Use, and Preservation of Books, and the Formation of Public and Private Libraries* (New York and London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1900). Although *A Book for All Readers* is a relatively complete—and surprisingly entertaining—compendium of Spofford's lectures and thoughts about libraries and librarianship, it cannot be claimed that it was the culmination of years of continual learning, because Spofford's opinions on these subjects had been formulated decades earlier. For example, his observations about binding, preservation, reference collections, bibliography, periodical literature, and the Library of Congress as the American national library are essentially the same views he expressed in the five articles he contributed to the 1876 U.S. Office of Education compilation *Public Libraries in the United States*.<sup>4</sup> But the origins of Spofford's views on these subjects can be traced back even further, to the period between 1845 and 1861 when he was a bookseller and newspaperman in the thriving city of Cincinnati.

### Spofford in Cincinnati, 1845–61

Born in Gilmanton, N.H., on September 12, 1825, Ainsworth Rand Spofford was the sixth child of Rev. Luke Ainsworth Spofford and Greta Rand Spofford.<sup>5</sup> Luke Spofford, a Presbyterian pastor, served eight different congregations in New Hampshire and Massachusetts between 1825 and 1845, the years of Ainsworth's birth and boyhood, which was spent in Chilmark, Mass., on Martha's Vineyard. Since poor health prevented Ainsworth from attending Amherst College, he was tutored at home. He developed an insatiable appetite for reading and, for all practical purposes, educated himself—a fact of which he was quite proud. In 1882 Amherst, which claimed his father Luke and

older brother Henry as alumni, awarded Ainsworth an honorary LL.D.

As a youth, Spofford became interested in book-binding and his father arranged for him to serve a brief apprenticeship in a local bindery. The isolation of Martha's Vineyard, however, soon forced the Spoffords to leave the island. A tubercular condition spread within the family in 1843 and was aggravated by severe weather and the inability to obtain adequate medical help. After two members of the family died, Luke Spofford decided to move. In 1845 the Spoffords and their two daughters left for Newburgh, N.Y., Henry went to Louisiana, and Ainsworth migrated west to Cincinnati where he soon found congenial employment as a bookstore clerk in the firm of E. D. Truman, bookseller and publisher.

E. D. Truman was Elizabeth D. Truman, whose husband, William T. Truman, a well-known publisher, had recently died. Until 1843 William had been in a partnership with Winthrop B. Smith, and together they launched the popular "Eclectic Series" of texts that soon included the famous McGuffey Readers. Elizabeth Truman, struggling to continue her husband's business, welcomed Ainsworth's eager help and, according to a contemporary, his "energy, great memory, and knowledge of books soon made him indispensable for the business and he was sought for by those entering the store."<sup>6</sup> Spofford continued his own reading at night, studying languages and devouring the works of his favorite authors, especially Ralph Waldo Emerson, Theodore Parker, and Nathaniel Hawthorne. Largely because of his interests, Mrs. Truman's bookstore became an informal literary center and Cincinnati's leading importer of the works of the New England transcendentalists. Politically, Spofford and his friends took a strong antislavery stand and became ardent "free-soilers." But it was his son's religious view that truly disturbed the Reverend Luke Spofford, who on November 23, 1848, confided to his brother Jeremiah:

But I must frankly say that, if he (Ainsworth) were half as correct in his religious creed as he appears to be in his political, it would give great joy to my heart. But alas, he has gone far away from the truth as it is in Jesus, & yet seems firmly persuaded in his own mind that he is a real Christian, & destined to future & immortal bliss! . . . This, I can assure you, is one of the greatest trials, if not the greatest, which I have ever experienced. And yet this

son is remarkably kind both to me & all the family—offering us pecuniary aid whenever needed.<sup>7</sup>

Spofford's experiences at E. D. Truman, which became Truman & Spofford in 1851, were of great practical value to him when he eventually came to the Library of Congress. It was at the bookstore that he developed his lifelong interest in acquisitions and book selection and enhanced his knowledge of binding and other booktrade skills. Between 1851 and 1859, Truman & Spofford published at least 15 books and pamphlets, which familiarized him with the publishing world and the copyright laws. On behalf of the firm, he made semiannual book-buying trips to Boston, where he met many booksellers and publishers and attended lectures by Emerson and Parker.<sup>8</sup>

The organization of the Literary Club of Cincinnati on October 29, 1849, was a natural culmination of the Truman & Spofford gatherings. There already was a literary society in Cincinnati, but it was too genteel for the young radicals from the bookstore. They formed their own club, pledging themselves to debate the controversial issues of the day. Lively discussions, catawba from the local vineyards, and good fellowship were characteristics of the Literary Club from its first days, but its most important function for Spofford was educational. The club widened his intellectual horizons and enhanced his self-confidence. His closest friends were always fellow Literary Club members; two of them, Reuben H. Stephenson and Rutherford B. Hayes, later were of great importance in his career at the Library of Congress. Stephenson, librarian of the Young Men's Mercantile Library Association in Cincinnati, was indirectly responsible for Spofford's acceptance of a position at the Library of Congress. In 1861 Spofford visited Stephenson's brother, Librarian of Congress John G. Stephenson, who soon persuaded him to take the job of Assistant Librarian of Congress. Rutherford B. Hayes, as a Congressman from 1865 to 1867, served as chairman of the Joint Committee on the Library and worked closely with his old friend, who was then Librarian of Congress, during the important first stages of Spofford's national library efforts.

Ainsworth Spofford was not only the principal organizer of the Literary Club but also its most frequent debater and essayist. In addition to his other roles, in the early years of the club Spofford



became a literary entrepreneur, and a most successful one. This phase of his career began in April 1850, when he invited his intellectual mentor, Ralph Waldo Emerson, to visit Cincinnati on a lecture tour sponsored by the club. Impressed by Spofford's petition of 99 signatures and his pledge of \$150, Emerson accepted. In the next few years, Spofford was also responsible for arranging the lecture tours that brought Theodore Parker and Bronson Alcott west for the first time.<sup>9</sup>

Spofford's adventures in literary entrepreneurship were valuable training for the future Librarian of Congress. He became a skillful practitioner of the art of persuasion, successfully convincing lecturers, sponsors, and audiences of the potential value of different lecture series. Once a speaker was committed to come to Cincinnati, Spofford persistently took care of all details—renting the hall, selling tickets, advertising, and guaranteeing a good audience. He also demonstrated his practical sense by using the lectures to increase the sales of Truman & Spofford, even selling books to the speakers themselves. Finally, since the lecture tours he arranged were invariably successful, Spofford's self-confidence and reputation were enhanced. Even Senator Salmon P. Chase was impressed. In a letter on March 10, 1852, to E. S. Hamlin, the Senator recommended that he discuss with Spofford, "a gentleman of talent, principle, and business qualities," the possibility of establishing a liberal newspaper in Cincinnati. Chase admitted to his friend that he did not know Spofford personally, but he had "formed a high opinion of him from the reports of others."<sup>10</sup>

Not surprisingly, the first book published by the new partnership of Truman & Spofford consisted of two essays recently read before the Literary Club. The first, which asserted the right of human conscience to transcend the written law—especially when that law was the Fugitive Slave Law—was delivered by Spofford on February 1, 1851. The second, a rebuttal from an unknown club member, was presented on April 5, 1851. The anonymous 112-page book, titled *The Higher Law Tried by Reason and Authority: An Argument Pro and Con*, was published shortly thereafter. The fairness shown in publishing both sides of the argument was characteristic of Spofford, who carefully noted in the preface: "Both essays are now published in accordance with a proposal made by the writer

of the first essay, that an article maintaining the opposite view should be published side by side with his own." Such fair-mindedness apparently had its limits, however. Shortly after the Truman & Spofford edition appeared in Cincinnati, the New York firm of S. W. Benedict published Spofford's 54-page essay without the rebuttal from his friend. It would appear that the enterprising Spofford arranged for the publication of his essay in New York soon after its Cincinnati appearance.<sup>11</sup>

The proud author sent a copy of the book to his friend Emerson, who in response went so far as to claim that Spofford's essay had so influenced his own discourse on the subject that:

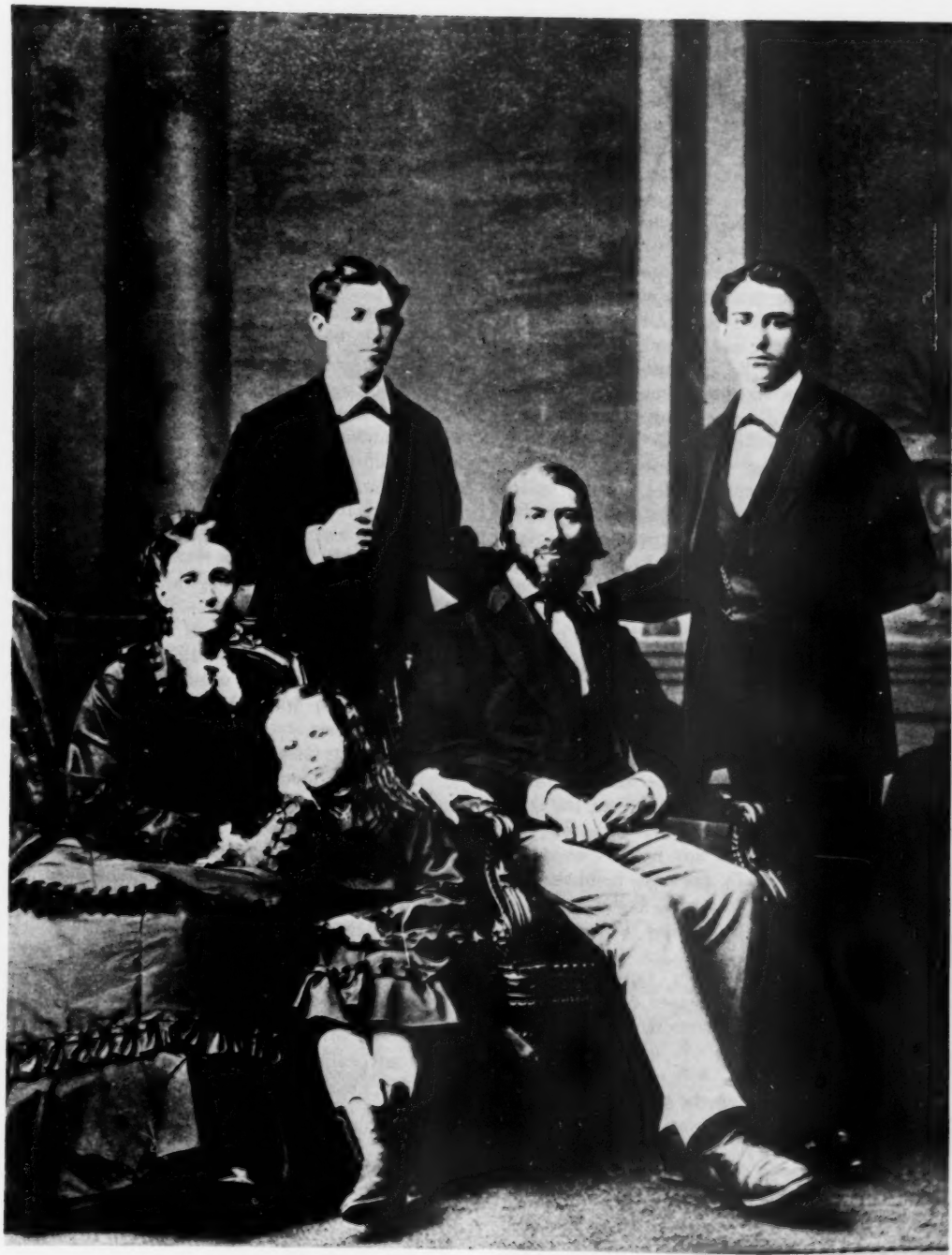
though I have tried again & again to scratch out your part of it, I have only succeeded in a degree, and fear I shall not hide the most unblushing plagiarisms, if I print it, as they say I must.<sup>12</sup>

Thus encouraged, Spofford continued his writing. In the October 1855 issue of *North American Review* he published a long essay on the works of Victor Hugo and, three years later, he turned to Emerson for assistance in having an essay titled "Napoleon's Nemesis" published. Although he did not find in it the "high merit" of Spofford's *Higher Law*, Emerson nevertheless sent the essay to Francis Underwood, editor of the recently established *Atlantic Monthly* magazine. It was rejected, but Emerson broke the news in a kind note that concluded: "It is a solid comfort to me to know that you are always there fast abiding in your convictions, & inevitably a power for good in that important community."<sup>13</sup>

Spofford's attempt to have this essay published was more than a Literary Club exercise, for by 1858 Truman & Spofford was in financial trouble and he was looking for other types of work. The need was somewhat urgent because by then he was a family man: on September 15, 1852, he had married Sarah Partridge, a schoolteacher, formerly from Franklin, Mass., and they now had two sons, Charles and Henry.

Truman & Spofford had always been more successful as a literary center than as a business ven-

*The Spofford family about 1870. Standing in the back row, from left to right, are sons Charles and Henry. Seated, left to right, are Sarah Spofford, daughter Florence, and Ainsworth Spofford.*



ture. Moreover, most of the books published by the firm can be easily identified as catering to Spofford's friends or to his personal interests. For example, in addition to *The Higher Law*, he published the *Catalogue* of his friend Reuben H. Stephenson's Mercantile Library, three volumes of sermons by his friend the Reverend Moncure D. Conway, two abolitionist novels, and several books concerning the teaching of languages. The store was hurt by the economic depression of 1857 and gradually evolved into a wholesale textbook and stationer's store. In early 1859, despite his continued efforts to keep it solvent, the firm of Truman & Spofford failed.

In mid-July of 1858, Spofford began writing strongly partisan letters about Ohio politics for the New York *Evening Post*, cloaking his identity under the pseudonym "Sigma." To his delight, in October the *Cincinnati Daily Commercial*, a Republican newspaper, reprinted three of his letters with favorable comment. It was a good omen, for in January 1859 Spofford became the *Commercial's* associate editor and chief editorial writer.

In the 1850's, the owner of the *Commercial*, Martin D. Potter, had closely aligned the newspaper with the young Republican party. In 1856 he sent his talented editor Murat Halstead to Philadelphia to report on the party's first national convention. A year later Halstead was dispatched to Washington to report on the inauguration of President Buchanan. Halstead developed a national reputation, and, by the time Spofford was hired, the *Commercial* was one of the most frequently quoted western newspapers, boasting the highest circulation of any newspaper in the Ohio Valley. Spofford's political opinions and literary skills were well known to Potter as well as to Halstead, who was a fellow Literary Club member.

When Spofford joined the *Commercial*, his friend Halstead, now designated editor in chief, traveled to Washington to report on the opening of the 36th Congress. The first Spofford editorial, published on January 11, 1859, entitled "A Bibliologist," was an attack on the naive book-buying practices of the city librarian. Other editorials during his first month on the *Commercial* also dealt with subjects he knew well: the higher law; antislavery and political parties (entitled "Partyism and Piracy"); the lecture system; historians and "national history"; modern literary style and

taste ("The Spasmodic School of Writing"); international copyright; practical affairs and intellectual activity ("Material Progress"); and the U.S. copyright system. During the next two years, Spofford continued to present *Commercial* readers with his opinions on an extraordinary wide range of political and literary topics. In 1883 Halstead commented that his associate editor had "completed his education," for Spofford's "marvelous knowledge of books was not less comprehensive and searching than now and he had a fine faculty for producing an endless supply of editorials."<sup>14</sup>

As an editorial writer, Spofford was never reluctant to promote his personal causes or, on occasion, to lash out against his enemies. One example of the latter was an editorial on April 16, 1860, in which he characterized Senator Louis T. Wigfall, a secessionist from Texas, as "the chief of the boors and blackguards" in Congress, a "social buffoon and political ignoramus" best known for his "boozy rant and rambling ineptitudes." But most of his editorials illustrated his concern with educating his audience and, above all, his ardent sense of purpose.

Spofford's intense personal interest in books naturally led him to write frequently about reading, libraries, and related topics. Therefore, by the time he arrived at the Library of Congress, his opinions about the proper use of libraries and the importance of books and reading had been not only formulated but also articulated in the columns of the *Commercial*. One recurrent theme was the selection of the "best" literature—the books worthy of permanent retention. He also discussed, at great length, the Ohio school library laws. This topic led him to the subject of the English public library system. In an editorial published on February 21, 1860, entitled "A Popular Free Library System," Spofford described the library movement in England and included the complete text of the British Public Libraries Act of 1855. After advocating a similar law for the state of Ohio, he concluded with a description of public libraries in various English cities, admiring especially the Liverpool Library, which he labeled a true "people's university."

On December 5, 1860, nearing the end of his two-month career as the *Commercial's* chief editorial writer, Spofford's long article on the art of



reading was printed. In it he combined a discussion of his favorite topic with personal advice. The editorial, like many others, contains opinions basic to Spofford's view of life—in this instance, his stern refusal to waste time in purposeless activity, thereby leaving one free for essential purposes. He succinctly posed both the problem and the solution:

How to combine the advantages of both the permanent and the periodical literature—how to study the past without becoming confirmed disciples of Dr. DRY-AS-DUST, and how to absorb the present without frittering our minds away on trifles, is the practical question for most of us. We have but a small modicum of leisure, against a *plenum* of literature. . . . To read much and to much profit, we must be able to make the time given to it the most available. It must not be spent on a deliberate effort to absorb all the words which we go over. This effort should be kept for the few things which are worth reading thoroughly. . . . The true art is to read for ideas—not words.

In early 1861 Spofford, rather than Halstead, was sent to Washington to report on the opening of the 37th Congress and the inauguration of President Lincoln. On January 16, 1861, the *Commercial's* new political correspondent arrived "in the city of mud & politicians," as he described it to his wife, Sarah.<sup>15</sup> With his usual energy and enthusiasm he plunged into the national political scene. During his first week in the capital, he produced six telegraphic dispatches and wrote five lengthy letters for *Commercial* readers—all signed Sigma. Strongly partisan, he praised the abolitionists and scorned the Democrats, especially the southern Democrats. Sigma's February correspondence reflected the increasing excitement over President-elect Lincoln's impending arrival. In the March 5, 1861, issue of the *Commercial*, portraying Washington on the eve of the inauguration, Spofford mentioned the Library of Congress for the first time: "At the Congressional Library, a herd of sight-seers press continually around, gazing into the quiet, well-stored alcoves, and reading aloud the titles of books they never saw or heard of." In all, Spofford's accounts of Lincoln's inauguration and the events surrounding it filled over a dozen columns in the *Commercial*, and the correspondent made no effort to conceal his admiration for the new President.<sup>16</sup>

After a three-month return to Cincinnati, during which Fort Sumter was fired upon and the Literary Club formed its own infantry company,

Spofford was again sent to Washington. This time he was the *Commercial's* war correspondent. As the hot summer days progressed, Sigma became increasingly irritated by the inaction of the Union Army. Suddenly, however, he found himself reporting on the Battle of Bull Run, where, as he told Sarah, it was necessary for him to use "them legs." In closing his letter, he indicated that he expected to return to Cincinnati as soon as Congress adjourned, probably in about a week. But several days later Spofford was confronted with a new possibility—becoming the Assistant Librarian of Congress. He explained to Sarah that he was doing less writing for the *Commercial*, leaving him "two or three hours leisure every day to devote to the rich stores of the Congressional Library. You know my passion for books. Dr. Stephenson gives me full range, & has even intimated a desire that I should consider the offer of a position as assistant Librarian."<sup>17</sup>

Dr. John G. Stephenson, a physician from Terre Haute, Ind., had recently been appointed Librarian of Congress by President Lincoln at the behest of Senator Henry S. Lane of Indiana.<sup>18</sup> A political appointee with little interest in his role as Librarian, Stephenson was looking for a knowledgeable assistant. His brother's friend, with his impressive knowledge of books, intellectual zeal, obvious energy, and Republican credentials, was a likely candidate.

Three days later, on August 5, Spofford received a definite offer from Dr. Stephenson. The possibility of a general pay reduction for all *Commercial* employees and the long hours Spofford was forced to spend at the job, especially at night, made the Library offer especially attractive. In a long letter written to Sarah immediately after he received the offer, Spofford outlined no fewer than 17 reasons "favoring" the job but could only find nine reasons that reflected "the other side." Besides escape from the *Commercial*, other positive rea-

*In a letter to his wife, dated August 5, 1861, Spofford carefully outlined the "Reasons Pro and Con" with regard to his accepting the position of Assistant Librarian of Congress. The reasons themselves amply illustrate his preference: the seventeen pro considerations apparently offset all the reasons offered on "The Other Side," except possibly the ominous "A Change of Profession—usually an evil." LCMS-40972-1*

## Reasons Pro and Con.

1. Less Laborious Employment -  
8 to 9 hours per day, during sessions  
of Congress, which last from Dec-  
to March or May, and 6 hours of  
every other day during recess of  
Congress, being 7 or 8 months a year.
2. No Evening nor night work, with  
saving of eye-sight, & time for family.
3. No Exhaustion of brain.
4. As consequence of last 3 particulars,  
lengthening of life by some years perhaps.
5. A congenial intellectual occupa-  
tion, keeping mind alert without  
severely taxing the powers.
6. Largely increased opportunities  
of acquaintance, especially  
with public men, Editors & Scholars.
7. Fine Scenery of Washington, &  
advantages of Public Institutions & children.
8. Time for occasional recreation  
and travelling.
9. Superior Advantages from Library  
& leisure toward accomplishing any  
literary work whatever.
10. One whole holiday per week the  
year round with no thought of business.
11. Ability to increase salary several  
hundred dollars by correspondence.
12. Deliverance from anxiety, hurry & rush  
about "going to press".
13. Removal from old associations  
of failure in business.
14. Escape from disagreeables of a coal-smoked  
city.

15. Superior opportunities for finding future literary or newspaper employment
16. Less Sedentary & more active employment - more standing & moving about - no stooping to write.
17. Greater facility of seeing & being seen by family relatives.

### The other Side

1. Less Positive Fixed Salary by \$200.
2. Contingency of Removal in 1865. (4 years)
3. Less Field for Distinction or Ambition
4. A Change of Profession - usually an evil
5. A Subordinate Station - nominally
6. Greater Expense of Living in Washington
7. Sacrifice by Removal - Furniture, &c
8. Total Change of Social & Family
9. Possibly More Unfavorable Climate

Probably, I shall think of a good many more things before I get through. At all events, I can't decide it without your help. So turn it over - but not in the least anxiously - for we shall be taken care of. If I should not get orders from home to return before next week, I may telegraph you to meet me somewhere on a certain day. You had better take your time tho. To make a good visit rather than hasten, even to return with me. You may, if you choose, write me one more line here as to this. And tell me whether a dispatch sent care John W. will reach you the same day. Truly Yours always Ainsworth

sons listed by Spofford included "a congenial intellectual occupation, keeping mind alert without severely taxing the powers," and "largely increased opportunities of acquaintance, especially with public men, editors & scholars."<sup>19</sup> After returning to Cincinnati in mid-August, Spofford accepted Stephenson's offer. A year later, on May 2, 1862, he informed his friend Henry B. Blackwell that he had accepted the job "chiefly to escape the severe night-work which was very wearisome to my energies without ministering specially to my intellectual growth or ambition."<sup>20</sup>

The new Assistant Librarian of Congress could not assume his duties until the latter part of September, since the editor Halstead had already scheduled another assignment for his traveling correspondent in St. Louis. It was also necessary to arrange for a new Washington correspondent to take over the daily telegraphic dispatches, even though it was agreed that Sigma would continue to write weekly letters to the *Commercial*. Two weeks before he was to begin work at the Library, Spofford was back in Washington. He informed his readers on September 14 that he was house hunting; moreover, "after a somewhat extensive perambulation," he had discovered that there were few houses available for rent, which seemed to deny the prevailing notion that there was a "stampede" of inhabitants from Washington, under stress of fear of the sacking of the city by Beauregard's army. . . ."

Sigma's last telegraphic dispatch to the *Commercial* was dated September 22. On or about September 23, 1861, the former Cincinnati newspaperman, tired of the daily rigors of journalism and eager for a more "congenial intellectual occupation," began his new duties as Assistant Librarian of Congress.

#### Assistant Librarian of Congress, 1861-64

Spofford always assumed that the Library of Congress was the American national library. His view notwithstanding, in 1861 the Library's collection was undistinguished in quality and meager in quantity, being surpassed in size by Harvard, New York's Astor Library, the Boston Public Library, the Boston Atheneum, and Yale. Nor had Congress shown much interest in transforming its Library, which it considered a legislative library, into the national library. Whenever such an expansion

was proposed by a Congressman or journalist, as happened on occasion, the idea was quickly dismissed. Members of the Library's governing board, the Joint Committee on the Library, as well as the various Librarians of Congress before Spofford, generally had been content with the institution's status. Nevertheless, by virtue of its establishment in Washington in 1800 and the strong interest shown in it by Thomas Jefferson, whose 6,000-volume library served as its foundation, the Library of Congress had substantial claim to a national role. Until Spofford arrived, however, no one had the interest, skill, or perseverance to capitalize on that claim.

Ainsworth Spofford saw no conflict between the functions of a legislative and a national library; in fact, he thought the functions were complementary. He felt, as did Thomas Jefferson, that a comprehensive collection covering all subjects was as important to Congress as it was to scholars and the general public. Spofford's belief in the positive value of reading for character development led him to insist on liberal access to the Library for all.

The notion of an American national library claimed many advocates before Spofford. By the middle of the 19th century, such New England intellectuals as Rufus P. Choate and George P. Marsh considered a national library to be a cultural necessity, without which the United States would be incapable of establishing its intellectual independence from Europe and the Old World. During the congressional debates that resulted in the creation of the Smithsonian Institution in 1846, Choate and Marsh urged that the Smithsonian bequest be used to establish such a library. Charles Coffin Jewett, the Smithsonian librarian from 1849 to 1854, went further: he tried to mold the Smithsonian into not only a national library but also a national bibliographic center. However, Joseph Henry, the secretary of the Smithsonian, was adamantly opposed to this concept and instead saw the Smithsonian as an institution which would encourage the "increase and diffusion" of scientific knowledge. Since Jewett's plan was not compatible with the secretary's, Henry dismissed his librarian in 1854, thus eliminating the possibility that the Smithsonian might develop into the national library. Jewett became head of the Boston Public Library and subsequently lost interest in his national library designs. Ironically, the idea was kept

alive in the 1850's by Joseph Henry himself, who favored such an institution so long as it did not affect the Smithsonian. Once the ambitious Ainsworth Spofford arrived at the Library of Congress, Henry lent not only his personal support but also that of the Smithsonian Institution to the cause of the Library of Congress as the national library.<sup>21</sup>

Spofford and Jewett shared several ideas relating to a national library; in particular, both recognized the importance of copyright deposit. Yet there was one major difference in their views. Spofford never envisioned the Library as the center of a network of American libraries, a focal point for providing other libraries with cataloging and bibliographic services. Instead, he viewed it as a unique, independent institution—a single, comprehensive collection of national literature to be used both by Congressmen and by the American people.

Spofford's Cincinnati experiences—his book-trade skills, knowledge of books and libraries, and political acumen—were of great importance for the future of the Library of Congress, since they enabled the Assistant Librarian to begin his national library efforts immediately. His accomplishments as Librarian of Congress, particularly remarkable during his first seven years (1865–72), were the direct fulfillments of efforts begun when he was Assistant Librarian.

For all practical purposes, Assistant Librarian Spofford directed the Library of Congress from 1861 to 1864, during Librarian Stephenson's term of office. In fact, Stephenson embarked on the first of his many extended absences from the Library on the day Spofford arrived and did not return for two months.<sup>22</sup> Stephenson spent much of his time as a battlefield surgeon, and his Assistant Librarian was quite happy to be left in charge. Writing to Henry Blackwell in 1862, Spofford informed him that since Dr. Stephenson had "no special knowledge of books," as his assistant he felt quite "free to act in all things."<sup>23</sup> With an experienced entrepreneur in charge, the Library of Congress began its transition from a small legislative library into a national institution.

Spofford found himself truly dismayed at the Library's state of neglect. He occasionally used his weekly Sigma letters to the *Commercial* to describe Library events and he did not hesitate to express his uninhibited opinion about its neglect.

The best evidence, however, of Spofford's immediate absorption in the problems of the Library is an 18-page, 3,500-word handwritten manuscript titled "Annual Report of the Librarian, December 16, 1861."<sup>24</sup> Although unsigned, it obviously is Spofford's first extended plea on behalf of the Library of Congress as the national library. Since the report is extremely critical of the Library's condition, Spofford prefaced it with a careful assurance of his motives, appealing in polite yet firm language for the support of the Joint Committee on the Library:

The undersigned, in submitting the following Report upon the condition of the Library of which he is made by law the Custodian, deems it proper to state that the facts and suggestions which it embodies are the fruit of careful labor and observation, and solicits the attention of the Joint Committee on the Library as calculated to repair its deficiencies and to promote its usefulness to those who are entitled to its benefits.

Within the Library, he reported that nothing was right: the entire place was coated with dust, the books needed repair and binding, and there were "remarkable deficiencies in the collections, which were especially in need of up-to-date encyclopedias, statistical references, and newspapers." For example, "that no Encyclopedia, less than twenty years old, is to be found in the Library of Congress is matter of constant surprise and inconvenience to members and others. . . ."

Continuing unabated, Spofford urged the committee to take more pride in the Library's appearance. In recommending a new marble floor to replace the dust-catching carpet, he compared the Library to other national libraries, noting that the floor of the British Museum was slate, "except that of the reading room, which is of solid oak, embedded in cement." Lamenting "the absence of nearly all the publications, new & old, of the Government of the United States," Spofford reminded the committee that the Library of Congress was, after all, the "Library of the Government."

Finally, the zealous Assistant Librarian attached the following eight separate appendixes to his report, supporting his criticisms, and outlining proposed remedies: 1) a current statement of expenditures; 2) a roster of institutions and individuals to whom complimentary copies of the newly published Library catalog should be sent; 3) a list of publications which should be forwarded



for the purpose of international exchange; 4) a memorandum comparing amounts paid for the Library's books with the lower prices obtainable if the Library would deal directly with a selected group of publishers in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia; 5) a proposed set of rules and regulations governing all aspects of the Library's operations; 6) a status report on the publication project of the U.S. Exploring Expedition, administered by the Library; 7) a list of urgently needed books and periodicals; and 8) an itemization of requisite U.S. government publications.

On January 31, 1862, Emerson was in Washington and Spofford welcomed his friend to the Library. He did not hesitate to show Emerson examples of shocking neglect in the Library during the past years, explaining that it "had been under Southern domination, and as under dead men." For this reason, the collections of medicine and theology were very large, while that of modern literature was "very imperfect."<sup>25</sup>

During the early months of 1862, using his Sigma pseudonym, Spofford continued his criticism of Congress and of politicians in general. In the February 12 issue of the *Commercial* he complained:

And if there is any good reason for paying \$3,000 per annum . . . for a third of a year's attendance, in Washington, of a body of men, two-thirds of whom could not earn as much in a whole year at home, it has not yet been satisfactorily shown.

Describing his Sigma letters to Henry B. Blackwell, Spofford admitted that they could be risky, especially since "too severe reflections upon individual Congressmen might give rise to unpleasant personal relations." It apparently was a chance that he was willing to take, however. In the same letter to Blackwell, dated May 8, 1862, Spofford admitted his aversion to politicians and described the purposeful way he spent his leisure time:

For myself, despising, perhaps unduly, the whole tribe and generation of politicians, I have systematically avoided social opportunities and engrossed myself in intellectual pursuits connected more-or-less intimately with acquiring a thorough knowledge of a great Library and accumulating materials for future use in literature.<sup>26</sup>

A second handwritten annual report, still bursting with criticism, albeit carefully worded, is dated January 7, 1863.<sup>27</sup> Although signed by the Librarian, it follows the same pattern as the first report

and is obviously Spofford's work.

In this report, Spofford began his skillful appeal for congressional support by pointing out that although the Library's collection of nearly 80,000 volumes was the fourth largest in the United States, "in its collective value it is second." Unfortunately, however, there probably was "no library in the country as poorly provided with means for the safe keeping of its more valuable parts" than the Library of Congress. A remedy to the situation, the expansion of the Library's rooms, was then proposed. Spofford also described important accomplishments since the first annual report, presented a year earlier. For example, retracing the path he had followed during his book-buying trips for Truman & Spofford, the Assistant Librarian had visited book stores and publishers in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. Utilizing his past skills, he had succeeded in obtaining books at an average cost of \$1.70, whereas the average cost of books purchased by the agent of the Joint Committee on the Library since December 1, 1860, was \$3.27. The Library's binding work was now being performed by two firms in Philadelphia at 15 percent less than the costs in Washington, and the quality was "much superior." Finally, there was a lengthy explanation of a new recommendation, that borrowing privileges be extended to include the "Judges and Solicitor of the Court of Claims." Spofford never stopped pressing the committee for the extension of library privileges to various categories of noncongressional users and for the extension of hours of service. He felt a library was worthwhile only if it was used, and he was never too particular about who used it.

Despite his personal misgivings about politicians in general, Spofford carefully cultivated the congressional support that he knew was necessary for his eventual success. His two annual reports as Assistant Librarian exhibited the same tactful, persuasive arguments that he was to use in his dealings with Congress for the rest of his career. While the reports were frank statements which outlined the Library's problems in detail, their tone was positive. Blame for past conditions was not assigned; instead, Spofford looked to the Library's future. Throughout his career, and despite his strong personal feelings, Spofford assiduously avoided name-calling—at least in public. All personal opinions about individual Congressmen and controversial

public issues were expressed only behind his Sigma pseudonym. Spofford's reputation for neutrality and fairness in public matters aided his personal efforts immeasurably. In spite of his political beliefs, after 1861 he was rarely identified with the Republican party and never with any special interest group. In the minds of Congressmen and the public he was identified only with the Library of Congress and his personal crusade to expand it into a national library.

Spofford's arguments on behalf of the Library, as outlined in the two annual reports, exhibited the same characteristics contained in his future annual reports as Librarian and in his many personal letters to Congressmen and other officials in support of the Library. In his national library arguments, Spofford invariably: 1) assumed the Library of Congress already was the national library; 2) presented his proposals as practical, relatively inexpensive alternatives which would enable Congress to perform its own tasks more efficiently; 3) appealed to both national and congressional pride; and 4) flattered Congress, optimistically predicting that, in its wisdom and genuine concern for the Library and what it represented, it would approve his proposed action. He was rarely disappointed.

Continuing his efforts to obtain additional funds for the Library, on October 8, 1863, Spofford made his first direct appeal to an Ohio friend. On that date he explained to Secretary of the Treasury Salmon P. Chase that an additional \$1,000 in the contingency fund was requisite so the Library could acquire necessities which previous administrations had neglected, including new furniture and catalog card drawers.<sup>28</sup> The increase was approved.

Spofford began to serve as a book purchasing agent for a few Ohio Congressmen, all personal friends, in 1864. He selected the books himself and passed along the Library's discount. On September 19, 1864, for example, Senator John Sherman wrote from Mansfield, Ohio, that he was most pleased with the books recently selected and shipped to him by Spofford. For the next few years Sherman provided him with \$400-\$500 annually to purchase books.<sup>29</sup> At the same time, the busy Librarian also bought books for the personal libraries of three other prominent Ohio friends: Rutherford B. Hayes, Salmon P. Chase, and James A. Garfield, then a Congressman. All these gentlemen strongly supported Spofford's national library

efforts. Garfield, in particular, developed a close relationship with Spofford and the Library of Congress; in fact, before he succeeded in obtaining franking privileges for the Library, Spofford used Representative Garfield's frank for official mail. Garfield also was one of the Library's most frequent users, and apparently relied on its resources for, among other purposes, the preparation of speeches. When he was in Cleveland in 1873 and trying to compose two speeches to deliver there, he lamented in his diary: "Every day I miss Spofford and our great Library of Congress."<sup>30</sup>

Somehow the busy Assistant Librarian also managed to compile a new catalog of the Library's contents, which was based on an entirely new system of arrangement. Earlier Library of Congress book catalogs had been arranged according to the Library's classification system; Spofford published a catalog that was arranged alphabetically by author. He felt that this was the most practical system for finding the desired books quickly. His opinion was succinctly expressed in the preface to the new four-volume catalog, which was published in September 1864:

In the arrangement of any catalogue of books, the chief desideratum, next to accuracy of description, is facility of reference, and to this end all minor considerations should be sacrificed.<sup>31</sup>

In the late autumn of 1864, it became apparent that Librarian Stephenson was going to resign. In spite of his accomplishments, it was not certain that Spofford would be promoted to the position of Librarian. His principal competitor was Charles Lanman, a local writer and a former librarian of the House of Representatives, who had the support of Senator Reverdy Johnson of Maryland, the second-ranking member of the Joint Committee on the Library. Although he knew that he had the support of the committee chairman, Senator Jacob Collamer of Vermont, Spofford decided to fight for the position, and he soon overwhelmed the opposition. The Assistant Librarian actively solicited endorsements from every Representative and Senator, and their response was impressive. On November 11, 1864, Spofford forwarded 16 letters favoring his promotion to the librarianship to President Lincoln, explaining that the endorsements were necessary because he had "no special (i.e., recent) political claims," having made it his business "to attend to the duties of my position the

engrossment even of my leisure time." Eight more letters and a petition were forwarded to the President on December 22, the date of Stephenson's resignation. The aggressive Assistant Librarian explained to Lincoln that these papers, together with those sent in November, "make up 22 Senators and 87 Representatives who have signified their preference in the matter." President Lincoln, on December 31, 1864, appointed Ainsworth Rand Spofford fifth Librarian of Congress.<sup>32</sup>

### Librarian of Congress, 1865-97

While serving as Assistant Librarian, Spofford gained the confidence of most members of the Joint Committee on the Library and began the expansion of the Library's collections and its national role. Once he was promoted to Librarian, Spofford was able to deal directly with individual committee members in an official capacity, and before long the members deferred to the Librarian in virtually all Library matters. The consistent support of the committee was of considerable importance in his endeavors. Spofford never presented the committee with the precise definition of a national library or a formal program for the development of the Library, but he repeatedly expressed his opinion in correspondence, in journal articles, and in his published annual reports (1866-96). He believed that the American national library, situated at the Library of Congress, should be a permanent, comprehensive collection of national literature used by Congress and those whom Congress represented. It was the sole library of the American government and the American people, a unique and an independent institution.<sup>33</sup>

Spofford's relatively narrow view of the role of a national library helped him achieve his goal. Taking advantage of a favorable post-Civil War intellectual and political climate, between 1865 and 1870 he gained congressional approval for several critical expansions of the Library. With the exception of the \$100,000 appropriated in 1867 for the purchase of the Force library, each was accomplished at little expense to the government. In all, there were six legislative acts which ensured a national role for the Library of Congress: 1) an appropriation providing for an expansion of the Library within its location in the Capitol, approved in 1865; 2) the copyright amendment of 1865, which brought copyright deposits into the Library's

collection; 3) the transfer, at Joseph Henry's suggestion, of the 40,000-volume library of the Smithsonian Institution to the Library of Congress; 4) the 1867 purchase of the nation's outstanding collection of Americana, the private library of the archivist and historian Peter Force; 5) the international exchange resolution of 1867, which provided for the continuing development of the Library's collection of foreign public documents; and 6) the copyright law of 1870, centralizing all United States copyright registration and deposit activities in the Library and requiring the deposit of two copies of each copyrighted book, pamphlet, map, photograph, print, and piece of music. In five years Spofford had gathered his "national collection," or at least the beginnings of it, and had provided for its continued growth. The Library of Congress had suddenly become the nation's largest library. Furthermore, this rapid and permanent expansion made a separate Library building a necessity. In his 1872 annual report, Spofford presented a recommendation and a detailed plan for a separate structure, beginning an effort that was to last a quarter of a century.

Although the six legislative acts and the plan for the new building were closely related and individually important achievements, the centralization of copyright activities and the successful campaign for a separate Library building were Spofford's most significant national library accomplishments and, for that reason, bear closer examination.

Before 1870, copyright registration and deposit functions in the United States were divided among the Department of State, U.S. district court offices, the Smithsonian Institution, the Library of Congress, and the Patent Office.<sup>34</sup> Spofford, like Jewett, believed that copyright deposits provided the most practical channel for accumulating a comprehensive collection of American publications. After struggling with the problem for five years, in 1870 Spofford proposed that all registration and deposit activities be centralized at the Library of Congress. According to his plan, two deposit copies—one for legal record and the other for library use—would be sent to the Library. The Librarian would be responsible for registering the works, enforcing the deposit stipulation, and keeping the copies deposited as legal evidence separate from the general collections.



Early in 1870, Spofford presented his ideas for the centralization of copyright activities to Representative Thomas A. Jenckes of Rhode Island, whose Committee on Patents was about to report out a bill for the revision and consolidation of the patent laws. Spofford already had obtained the support of Samuel S. Fisher, the recently appointed commissioner of patents. Fisher, a patent lawyer from Cincinnati, had been a member of the Literary Club of Cincinnati, and Fisher and Jenckes had corresponded on the subject of patent law reform before Fisher came to Washington. Assured of the support of the Patent Office, which was the copyright registration agency and legal custodian of the deposit for record, Spofford wrote a 1,600-word letter on April 9, 1870, to Representative Jenckes, in which he outlined the arguments favoring the centralization of all copyright activities at the Library.<sup>35</sup>

Less than a week later, on April 14, 1870, Jenckes skillfully condensed Spofford's eight pages of arguments into a short, effective speech advocating the transfer of the copyright business to the Library, and he attached the proposal to his pending bill to revise the patent laws. Jenckes' bill passed Congress easily, and when it was signed into law by President Ulysses S. Grant on July 8, 1870, the Library of Congress became the first central agency for copyright registration and for the custody of copyright deposits in the United States.

Spofford began his efforts to expand the Library's space in the Capitol in 1863 when he was Assistant Librarian. The approval of that expansion in the appropriation act of March 2, 1865, was his first significant legislative victory as Librarian. That achievement was extremely important, for it established a precedent for the future enlargement of the Library to house its growing collections. It also enabled the Librarian to acquire two collections that contributed greatly to the Library's national stature, the Smithsonian and the Force libraries.

While these two collections nearly filled the new wings authorized in 1865, it was the copyright law of 1870 that made additional space imperative. During 1871, the first full year of the law's operation, approximately 20,000 books, periodicals, musical and dramatic compositions, photographs, prints, and maps were acquired exclusively through copyright. Assuming that "the constant

and rapid growth" of the Library left Congress with no alternative except to provide additional space, in his annual report for that year Spofford suggested a separate Library building. In his 1872 annual report he insisted on it, urging the Joint Committee on the Library to recognize the "absolute necessity of erecting a separate building for the Library and the copyright department conjoined."

In fact, over half of Spofford's 1872 report is devoted to delineating the desirable features in the building he envisioned. This annual report is the most important document in the history of the Library building, for it outlines the basic idea behind the structure, which itself would not be completed until 1897. That Spofford's conception of the building should survive after a seemingly endless architectural competition, countless congressional arguments about its design and location, and several changes of architects and engineers is a considerable tribute to his foresight, tenacity, and political skill.<sup>36</sup>

What the Librarian termed "the Library building question" dominated his annual reports as well as his thoughts until April 15, 1886, when the matter was finally settled. On that date President Grover Cleveland approved an act to erect a new Library of Congress across the east plaza from the Capitol, utilizing a modified version of the original Italian Renaissance design of Smithmeyer & Pelz. Although the building was not completed for another 11 years, Spofford achieved what he wanted: a monument that both expressed and enhanced the national purpose of the institution it housed. Furthermore, the widespread publicity he obtained in newspapers and popular magazines during those years helped his national library efforts considerably.<sup>37</sup>

Spofford did not allow lack of space to halt his collection-building efforts. Of particular note was a precedent he established in May 1882 for the acceptance by the Library of gifts to the nation from private citizens. The citizen was the Washington physician Joseph M. Toner, and the gift was his 40,000-volume private library, which Spofford had been eyeing for several years. The legal basis for accepting the gift was essentially an informal agreement between Spofford and his friend from Ohio, Senator John Sherman, who was then serving as chairman of the Joint Committee on

the Library. On March 25, 1882, during the initial negotiations, Spofford informed Toner:

While the Chairman of the Library Committee conceives that there is full power vested in the Committee under existing laws, to receive and provide for the separate custody of any donations of books, acting as the official organ of Congress, he suggests that it would be eminently proper that a special act should be passed, recognising and accepting the gift in behalf of the Government. . . .<sup>38</sup>

The necessary joint resolution was approved on May 19, 1882, and the collection was acquired, even though space in the overcrowded Library could be found only "by partitioning off a portion of the crypt" under the Capitol rotunda. In his 1882 annual report, Spofford nevertheless proclaimed his hope that "this first example of the gift of a large private library to the nation will be an incentive to other similar donations or bequests."

For the most part, Spofford operated quite independently from the American library movement and the American Library Association itself.<sup>39</sup> The primary reason was, quite simply, that he did not have the time to participate. By 1876, when the American Library Association was founded, Spofford's Library of Congress already was the leading library in the United States and he was completely absorbed in the struggle for a new building. Spofford was a charter member of the ALA but could not get away from Washington to attend many of its annual meetings. At the 1896 congressional hearings on the Library, he explained that because of "this onerous business of copyrights," he had been able to attend only four of the annual meetings—and at two of those he had been the host in Washington! About the same time, in response to a letter from the trustees of the John Crerar Library asking him to recommend a candidate for librarian of that institution, Spofford bluntly stated: "My range of acquaintance with the skilled men of the profession is limited by my very engrossing official duties to comparatively few." He suggested that the trustees consult either Melvil Dewey or Justin Winsor, since they "would have far wider knowledge of men worthy of consideration than myself."<sup>40</sup>

Spofford's independence from other libraries and librarians was accentuated by his idea of a national library as well as by his personal temperament. He believed the Library should be, essen-

tially, a comprehensive accumulation of the nation's literature, the American equivalent of the British Museum and the other great national libraries of Europe. He did not view it as a focal point for cooperative library activities and was not inclined to exert leadership in that direction. Furthermore, his personal enthusiasms were acquisitions and bibliography, while many younger librarians were interested in problems of library organization.

Because Spofford's administration between 1872 and 1897 was dominated by the unceasing flow of materials into cramped quarters, other Library activities suffered. To the dismay of many, Spofford's carefully conceived scheme for a complete index to the documents and debates of Congress was abandoned about 1877, after several years of work. In 1880 he was forced to cease publication of the Library's alphabetical catalog after only two volumes (A-Cragin) had been published. The Library gradually fell behind in its exchanges and in all aspects of its daily business. Historians as well as librarians complained. For example, in a letter to his friend O. H. Marshall, Francis Parkman confided: "They say I am the worst correspondent in the world; but they lie. Spofford beats me all hollow. I sometimes answer a letter; he never does."<sup>41</sup> Parkman may have been exaggerating but his complaint became common in the late 1880's.

It appears that during this same period Spofford was also forced to forgo most Library recordkeeping, including that of the copyright department. This situation led, in 1895, to a Treasury Department investigation of the copyright accounts; the Librarian was completely exonerated of any intentional wrongdoing, but he was deeply embarrassed.<sup>42</sup> Another unhappy event was the 1896 theft of valuable manuscripts from Spofford's office by two Library employees. The worst part, perhaps, was that the Librarian did not know that the manuscripts—which included George Washington's diary—were missing until a New York manuscript dealer got in touch with the Washington police.<sup>43</sup> These events, along with Spofford's

*Spofford at his cluttered desk in the old Library of Congress in the Capitol. This photograph was taken about 1896, a year before the spacious new Library building opened. LC-USZ62-44185*



advancing age and intellectual stubbornness, created restlessness, if not unhappiness, among the leaders of the profession. They looked to the Library of Congress for a new type of leadership. While cognizant of Spofford's problems and appreciative of his accomplishments, the ALA leadership was anxious to influence the expansion of the role and functions of the Library. As the magnificent new Library building neared completion, the Joint Committee on the Library provided the association with the perfect opportunity.

The committee's hearings on the condition of the Library were held from November 16 to December 7, 1896, before the move into the new building. The purpose was to recommend a new organization plan. Although Spofford was the principal witness, the ALA sent six librarians to testify, including its president, William H. Brett, librarian of the Cleveland Public Library; Melvil Dewey, director of the New York State Library; and Herbert Putnam, librarian of the Boston Public Library. The testimony of Dewey and Putnam on the desirable features of the Library of Congress was of special interest. Both men avoided direct criticism of Spofford, but it was obvious that their view of the proper functions of the Library differed from that of the aging Librarian of Congress. Putnam wholeheartedly endorsed Dewey's description of the necessary role of a national library: "a center to which the libraries of the whole country can turn for inspiration, guidance, and practical help." Centralized cataloging, interlibrary loan, and a national union catalog were among the services described.<sup>44</sup>

Immediately after the end of the hearings, Putnam supplemented his comments in a letter in which he summarized the testimony of the ALA witnesses. The future Librarian of Congress found that:

On one point in particular we were very strongly in unison . . . an endeavor should now be made to introduce into the Library the mechanical aids which will render the Library more independent of the physical limitations of any one man or set of men; in other words, that the time has come when Mr. Spofford's amazing knowledge of the Library shall be embodied in some form which shall be capable of rendering a service which Mr. Spofford as one man and mortal can not be expected to render.<sup>45</sup>

Putnam was stating, tactfully, that not only was it time for the Library of Congress to modernize, but

also its services should be expanded far beyond those offered by the Library under Spofford.

However, the restructuring of the Library's functions could not wait for the final report of the Joint Committee on the Library. Provisions for reorganization were included in the legislative appropriations for fiscal year 1898, approved February 18, 1897, three weeks before the hearings and report of committee were published. The appropriations act gave the Librarian of Congress the authority to establish the Library's rules and regulations, increased the staff from 42 to 108, and recognized the Library's national role through the expansion of all aspects of its operations. The committee therefore declined to recommend any organization plan when its hearings and report were published on March 3, 1897, pointing out that the Librarian himself now had the authority to make all rules and regulations, a power heretofore held, at least technically speaking, by the committee itself.<sup>46</sup>

#### Chief Assistant Librarian, 1897-1908

When the new law went into effect on July 1, 1897, President William McKinley appointed a new Librarian of Congress, bringing to a close Spofford's 32-year career as Librarian. The President, as well as the library profession, felt it was time to replace the 72-year-old Librarian with a younger and more skilled administrator; all were relieved when Spofford himself agreed and cheerfully stepped down. The new Librarian, the veteran journalist and diplomat John Russell Young, immediately appointed Spofford Chief Assistant Librarian.<sup>47</sup> Spofford frequently served as Acting Librarian during Young's short but productive term of office, which lasted only until January 20, 1899, when Young died after a brief illness. Retaining to a remarkable degree the physical and mental vigor of his earlier years, Spofford also served as Chief Assistant Librarian in Herbert Putnam's administration, which began on April 5, 1899.

As Chief Assistant Librarian, Spofford was freed from most of the administrative duties that he had found so burdensome. Once again he could concentrate on his first love: developing the Library's collections. He made two trips to Europe primarily for this purpose. He also found more time for writ-



ing, editing, and lecturing. An especially memorable occasion was his return to Cincinnati in October 1899 to help celebrate the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Literary Club. In his address before the club on October 28, he restated his belief in the Library of Congress as the national library and reaffirmed his personal idealism:

The president has referred, in terms all too complimentary, to my chosen vocation as a librarian and to my connection with the magnificent new library building at Washington. While I take no personal pride in it, I am delighted to have lived to see its completion and to enjoy its many utilities, freed from the grinding cares which so long vexed my weary soul amid the frightful congestion of the nation's books in the narrow and overcrowded Capitol building. The removal to that airy and spacious edifice was like being suddenly translated from purgatory into paradise. I call it the "the book palace of the American people," in which you all have equal rights with me. It is our great national conservatory of books, in which the works of all of you will be welcomed and forever preserved. . . .

Finally, permit me to say, as one who has lived long and tasted much of the sweet and the bitter that are mingled in the cup of life, that I adhere evermore to that belief in the best, which, amid all the trials and disappointments of life, should never be surrendered. Amid the prevalent overweening worship of wealth, the tyranny of fashion, the baseness of politics, and the false luster of worldly glory, let us, brothers of the Literary Club, hold fast by the unmeasured powers of the mind. We need no higher ambition than that our names may stand always for fruitful labor and fair play, for personal independence and for useful life.<sup>49</sup>

Spofford was also able to devote time to local library affairs, including becoming the director of Columbian College's new library school. In addition to his official reports as Librarian and his lectures, Spofford wrote several articles on a wide variety of subjects and edited nearly a dozen multi-volume reference works. He maintained that a librarian was primarily an educator who must be constantly concerned with the diffusion and use of knowledge, not merely with its custody. His many unofficial writings, especially the multivolume reference compilations intended for a popular audience, were a consequence of this philosophy. So were his many affiliations with literary and historical societies, where he presented papers and debated with the same fervor that characterized his Literary Club days.

Spofford's crucial role in the shaping of the Library of Congress was fully appreciated by his

friend and successor Herbert Putnam. Putnam greatly expanded all aspects of the Library's activities, especially its national services. Among other innovations, he established a new classification system, inaugurated the sale of printed catalog cards to other libraries, and initiated an inter-library loan system. Putnam's overall view closely resembled that of Charles Coffin Jewett many years before: a national library should not only cooperate with other libraries but also assume a position of leadership in the library world. Putnam accurately observed, however, that the national library services and the remarkable expansion of the Library during his administration could not have occurred without the Library's comprehensive collection of Americana and its spacious building, both the result of Spofford's efforts between 1861 and 1897.<sup>50</sup>

William Warner Bishop, superintendent of the reading room from 1907 to 1915, called Putnam's treatment of Spofford "a never failing delight," describing it as "deferential, affectionate, kindly, and considerate."<sup>50</sup> It was also protective; for example, when Spofford naively became involved in an embarrassing business scheme promoting former Congressman James D. Richardson's *Messages and Papers of the Presidents* (1897), Putnam skillfully intervened on behalf of his Chief Assistant.<sup>51</sup> Spofford's life was inseparable from the Library that he did so much to mold, and thanks largely to Putnam, the last years were fruitful and pleasant. Still in the service of the institution he joined in 1861, Ainsworth Rand Spofford died on August 11, 1908, at the age of 83.

### Spofford's Lasting Influence

Putnam paid his friend a final official tribute in the Librarian's 1908 annual report, first noting that Spofford truly had served as Librarian Emeritus during his last decade, then concluding:

His most enduring service—the increase of its collections—continued to the last few weeks of his life, and continued with the enthusiasm, the devotion, the simple, patient, and arduous concentration that had always distinguished it. The history of it during its most influential period will be the history of the Library from 1861 to 1897. This will in due course . . . appear.

The copyright laws and the new building were Spofford's most singular accomplishments in bringing his vision of an American national library to fruition. Later Librarians, of course, have



greatly expanded the Library's functions and services, but their achievements have been based on Spofford's fundamental premise that a national library was a great national collection universal in both its range and its usefulness.

Spofford was the Librarian of Congress who permanently established the dual nature of the Library: during his administration it became, and it remains today, both a legislative and a national library. Convinced that the Library that served the American national legislature *was* the national library of both the government and the people, he expanded its collections and functions accordingly. Since the turn of the century, critics have maintained that the national library should be in the executive branch of government, where its primary purpose would be service not to Congress but to the nation as a whole. Others have felt that Congress should officially designate the Library as the National Library of the United States. Spofford never felt called upon to debate either of these questions, concentrating instead on obtaining the "liberal support" of Congress for the growth of the institution.<sup>52</sup>

Spofford was the first Librarian of Congress to assume the responsibility for selecting books for the collections; before his administration the function had been carried out by the chairman of the Joint Committee on the Library. With his bookstore experience and interest in acquisitions, it would have been unthinkable for Spofford to defer to others. Moreover, the first two committee chairmen under whom he served, Senator Jacob Colamer of Vermont and Representative Rutherford B. Hayes of Ohio, were delighted that the Librarian took this initiative. Spofford never let a challenge to this authority go unanswered, as a new chairman, Senator Edwin S. Morgan of New York, learned in 1868 when he questioned two of the Librarian's book selections. Spofford responded quickly to Morgan's inquiry, clearing up at least one misunderstanding and firmly, but politely, informing him why the two books had been purchased:

I bought "The Lover's Dictionary"—lately published by Harper & Bros., because it is the largest dictionary of quotations of poetry, alphabetically arranged, ever published, and as such, indispensable to answer the questions continually arising in every library as to the authorship of particular sentences. . . . The other work to which your inquiry extends, De Miller's "Abuses of

the Sexual Function," I bought because it is a new treatise, by an eminent physician, on a subject in which the Library of Congress has every important work issued in English & French.<sup>53</sup>

Since he dominated the Joint Committee on the Library so thoroughly, Spofford also assumed other important responsibilities previously in the committee's domain, such as setting the Library's budget, establishing its rules, and hiring and dismissing its employees. Therefore when Congress, in its February 18, 1897, reorganization of the Library, stipulated that the Librarian should assume sole responsibility for making the "rules and regulations for the government" of the Library, it was only sanctioning what had already taken place during Spofford's administration.

Finally, Spofford's basic role in the administrative reorganization of the Library should be recognized. There were seven employees in the Library when he assumed the position of Assistant Librarian in 1861, and the collections totaled approximately 70,000 volumes. By 1897, those collections numbered nearly 900,000 volumes and uncounted thousands of maps, musical works, prints, and photographs. At that time there were 42 employees, but Spofford admitted that 26 of them worked fulltime on the copyright business, which also took up 75 percent of his time. Obviously a separate copyright department and a full-time register of copyrights were desperately needed, and Spofford recommended both in his 1895 annual report.

Primarily because of the chaos created by the overcrowded conditions, there was no particular organization pattern in the Library during Spofford's long term as Librarian. Yet in his own mind Spofford visualized how the Library should be organized once it occupied the new building, and he began preparing for this arrangement in the 1870's. In addition to a separate unit for the administration of copyright, there were several classes of material received through copyright that constituted natural administrative units, namely printed books, maps and charts, graphic arts, and music. Through the acquisition of the Force library, Spofford became increasingly interested in American historical manuscripts and, in his 1875 annual report, he asked Congress to authorize the employment of a "competent historical scholar" to arrange and index manuscripts.

In Spofford's view the Smithsonian library, acquired in 1866, formed a natural foundation for the Library's science collections. He also planned on separate cataloging, binding, and periodical units and, of course, a reading room service operating out of the great central reading room—deliberately patterned after the British Museum.

This basic organizational plan was discussed at great length by Spofford in a special report to Congress in 1895, in congressional hearings during November and December of 1896, and in a statement early in 1897 on the use of the Congressional Library.<sup>54</sup> Virtually all of Spofford's suggestions, including those for a greatly increased staff, were accepted by Congress and incorporated into the reorganization plan that became effective with the beginning of the new fiscal year, on July 1, 1897. In this sense, Spofford provided his successors not

only with a magnificent collection and building but also with a basic administrative structure.

Ainsworth Rand Spofford was Librarian of Congress for 32 years; Herbert Putnam served for 40 years, from 1899 until 1939, when he then became, in name as well as function, Librarian Emeritus of Congress. In his "Remarks at a dinner honoring the 150th anniversary of the Library of Congress, December 12, 1950," Putnam's thoughts turned back to the man whom he had succeeded more than half a century before:

Very few executives have had the fortune to live with their posterity and to be welcomed with a eulogy instead of an elegy. But if you are summoning shades of the past, you must not fail to summon one shade and keep him contemporary—the valiant, persistent . . . "forecasting," "foretelling," "prophesying," shade . . . —Ainsworth Spofford.<sup>55</sup>

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> For a detailed account of Spofford's influence on both the Library of Congress and American librarianship, see Ainsworth Rand Spofford, *Ainsworth Rand Spofford: Bookman and Librarian*, ed. John Y. Cole (Littleton, Colo.: Libraries Unlimited, Inc., 1975). See also John Y. Cole, "Ainsworth Spofford and the 'National Library,'" (Ph.D. diss., George Washington University, 1971).

<sup>2</sup> A bibliography of Spofford's writings is in Spofford, *Ainsworth Rand Spofford: Bookman and Librarian*, pp. 187–99.

<sup>3</sup> Spofford to the Literary Club, October 25, 1886, Archives of the Literary Club of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, Ohio.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Bureau of Education, *Public Libraries in the United States of America; Their History, Condition, and Management*. Special Report, Part I (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1876), pp. 253–61, 673–78, 679–85, 686–710, 733–44. Spofford not only was a major contributor to the volume but also aided in its inception and organization; see Francis Miksa, "The Making of the 1876 Special Report on Public Libraries," *Journal of Library History* 8 (January 1973): 30–40.

<sup>5</sup> See Jeremiah Spofford, *A Genealogical Record . . . of the Descendants of John Spofford and Elizabeth Scott* (Boston: Alfred Mudge and Sons, 1888).

<sup>6</sup> John W. Herron, "Biographical Sketch of Spofford," June 30, 1894, Archives of the Literary Club of Cincinnati.

<sup>7</sup> Ainsworth Rand Spofford Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>8</sup> For information on Parker, see John C. Broderick, "Problems of the Literary Executor: The Case of Theodore Parker," *Quarterly Journal of the Library of Congress* 23 (October 1966): 261–73.

<sup>9</sup> For details, see Louise Hastings, "Emerson in Cincinnati," *New England Quarterly* 11 (September 1938): 443–69, and C. Carroll Hollis, "A New England Outpost; as Revealed in Some Unpublished Letters of Emerson, Parker, and Alcott to Ainsworth Spofford," *New England Quarterly* 38 (March 1965): 65–85.

<sup>10</sup> Salmon P. Chase Papers, LC.

<sup>11</sup> A copy of the Truman & Spofford edition is in the Minnesota Historical Society, Minneapolis, Minn. The Library of Congress owns the S. W. Benedict edition.

<sup>12</sup> May 23, 1851, Spofford Papers.

<sup>13</sup> July 1, 1858, Spofford Papers.

<sup>14</sup> "History of the Cincinnati Commercial" (1889), Murat Halstead Papers, Cincinnati Historical Society.

<sup>15</sup> Spofford Papers.

<sup>16</sup> Spofford's 1861 Sigma correspondence is quoted at greater length in David C. Mearns, *The Story up to Now; the Library of Congress, 1800–1946* (Washington: Library of Congress, 1947), pp. 79–84.

<sup>17</sup> July 23 and August 2, 1861, Spofford Papers.

<sup>18</sup> Richard G. Wood, "Librarian-in-Arms: The Career of John G. Stephenson," *Library Quarterly* 19 (October 1949): 263–69.

<sup>20</sup> Spofford Papers. For a full account of Spofford's appointment, see John Y. Cole, "A Congenial Intellectual Occupation," *Manuscripts* 26 (Fall 1974):247-53.

<sup>21</sup> National American Woman Suffrage Association Archives. Hereafter cited as NAWSA Archives.

<sup>22</sup> For a discussion of early efforts to establish a national library in the United States, see John Y. Cole, "Of Copyright, Men, and a National Library," *Quarterly Journal of the Library of Congress* 28 (April 1971):114-36.

<sup>23</sup> Stephenson's letters for late 1861 are in Librarians' Letterbooks, LC. In his *Story up to Now*, Mearns concludes that Stephenson did the Library of Congress neither harm nor good during his administration, an assessment apparently shared by Wood in his "Librarian-in-Arms."

<sup>24</sup> May 2 and September 22, 1862, NAWSA Archives.

<sup>25</sup> Library of Congress Archives. This important document is discussed at greater length in Cole, "Ainsworth Spofford and the 'National Library,'" pp. 72-75, and is reproduced in Spofford, *Ainsworth Rand Spofford: Bookman and Librarian*, pp. 55-63.

<sup>26</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Journals of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. Edward Waldo Emerson and Waldo Emerson Forbes, 10 vols. (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1909-14), 9:395.

<sup>27</sup> NAWSA Archives.

<sup>28</sup> LC Archives.

<sup>29</sup> Librarians' Letterbooks.

<sup>30</sup> Sherman to Spofford, September 19, 1864, and April 28, 1869, Spofford Papers.

<sup>31</sup> Spofford to Chase, October 6, 1868, Chase Papers; John Peters to Hayes, March 26, 1870, Rutherford B. Hayes Papers, Hayes Library, Fremont, Ohio; Spofford to I. S. Derby, July 10, 1867, Garfield Papers, LC; and Spofford to S. I. Bowen, May 27, 1867, LC. Diary of James A. Garfield, June 25, 1873, Garfield Papers.

<sup>32</sup> U.S. Library of Congress, *Alphabetical Catalogue of the Library of Congress; Authors* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1864), p. 4.

<sup>33</sup> Record Group No. 59, General Records of the Department of State, National Archives and Records Service.

<sup>34</sup> A summary of Spofford's view is found in his "The Function of a National Library," in *Handbook of the New Library of Congress*, comp. Herbert Small (Boston: Curtis and Cameron, 1897), pp. 123-28.

<sup>35</sup> See discussion in Cole, "Of Copyright, Men, and a National Library," pp. 114-36.

<sup>36</sup> Librarians' Letterbooks.

<sup>37</sup> The relevant portions of the 1872 annual report are reproduced in Spofford, *Ainsworth Rand Spofford: Bookman and Librarian*, pp. 74-79. For a detailed account of the architectural competitions and problems, see John Y. Cole, "Smithmeyer & Pelz; Embattled Archi-

tecs of the Library of Congress," *Quarterly Journal of the Library of Congress* 29 (October 1972):282-307.

<sup>38</sup> Spofford's role in the planning and construction of the new building is described in John Y. Cole, "A National Monument for a National Library; Ainsworth Spofford and the New Library of Congress, 1871-1897," in *Records of the Columbia Historical Society*, vol. 48 (Washington: Published by the Society, 1973), pp. 468-507. For additional details about the building, see Helen-Anne Hilker, "Monument to Civilization; Diary of a Building," *Quarterly Journal of the Library of Congress* 29 (October 1972): 234-66.

<sup>39</sup> Librarians' Letterbooks.

<sup>40</sup> John Y. Cole, "LC and ALA, 1876-1901," *Library Journal*, October 15, 1953, pp. 2965-70.

<sup>41</sup> Letter from Spofford to Messrs. Jackson, Blatchford, & Keith, Trustees of the Crerar Library, February 25, 1895, reproduced in *The John Crerar Library, 1895-1944* (Chicago, 1945), p. 36.

<sup>42</sup> Francis Parkman, *Letters of Francis Parkman*, ed. Wilbur R. Jacobs, 2 vols. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1960), 2: 149-50.

<sup>43</sup> The episode was thoroughly reported by the press. See the *Washington Evening Star*, July 10 and August 21, 1895; the *Washington Post*, December 10, 1897; and the *New York Herald Tribune*, December 11, 1897.

<sup>44</sup> See Fred Shelley, "Manuscripts in the Library of Congress," *American Archivist* 11 (January 1948): 11-14.

<sup>45</sup> U.S. Congress, Joint Committee on the Library, *Condition of the Library of Congress, March 3, 1897*, 54th Cong., 2d sess., Senate Report 1573, pp. 139-68, 179-203, 216-28.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 228.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. i-ii; 29 Stat. 538.

<sup>48</sup> Young would not accept the post without Spofford's consent, and the appointment of Spofford as Chief Assistant Librarian was agreed upon before President William McKinley's nomination of Young. See John Russell Young to Melvil Dewey, Librarians' Letterbooks, August 13, 1897, and the *Washington Evening Star*, June 30, 1897.

<sup>49</sup> *The Literary Club of Cincinnati* (Cincinnati: Ebbert & Richardson Co., 1903), pp. 16-18.

<sup>50</sup> See Herbert Putnam, "A Librarian Past: Ainsworth Rand Spofford—1825-1908," *The Independent*, November 19, 1908, pp. 1149-55.

<sup>51</sup> William Warner Bishop, "The Library of Congress, 1907-1915; Fragments of Autobiography," *Library Quarterly* 18 (January 1948):6.

<sup>52</sup> The episode is described in Robert D. and Helen C. Stevens, "Documents in the Gilded Age: Richardson's Messages and Papers of the Presidents," *Government Publications Review* 1 (Spring 1974):233-40.

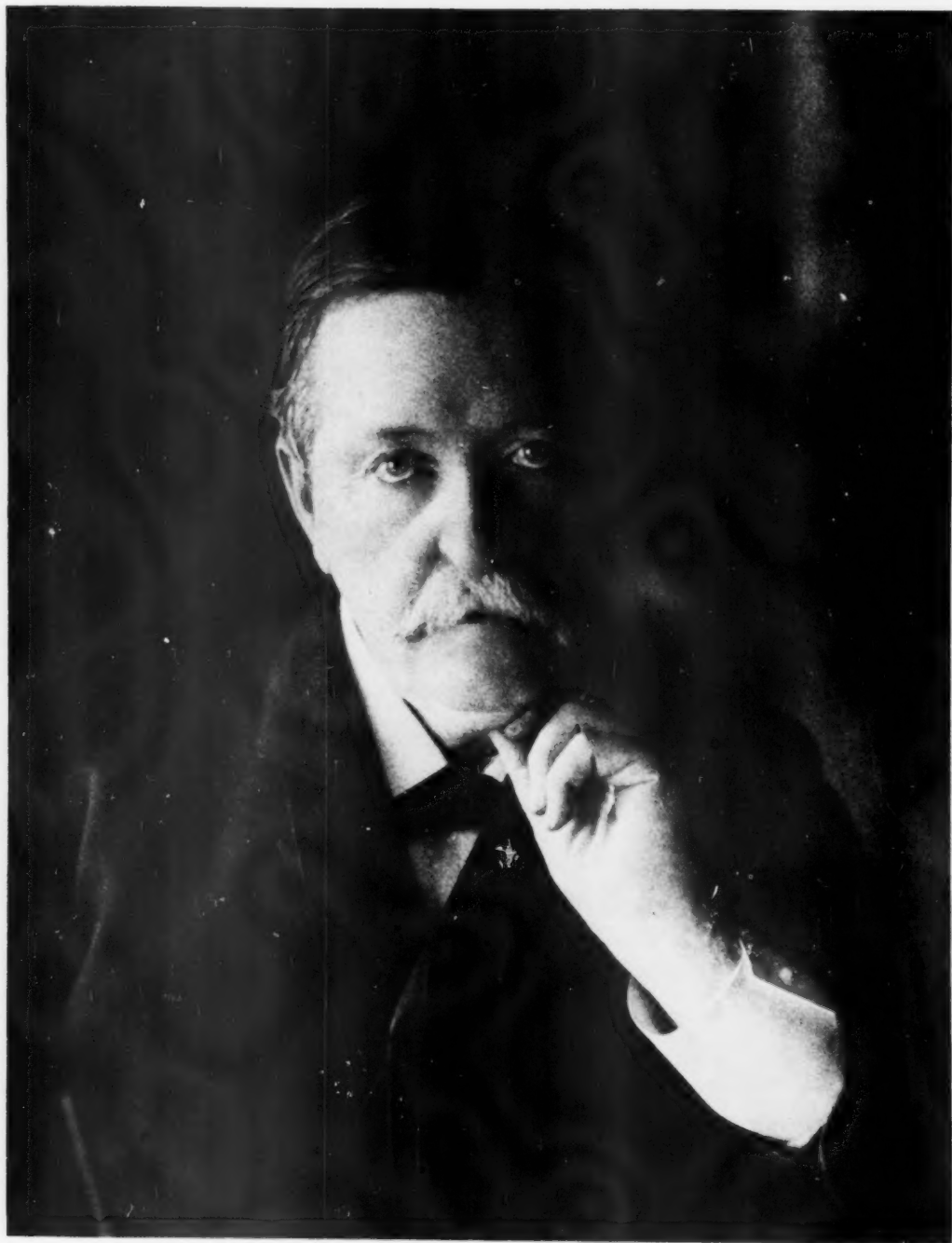
<sup>53</sup> For an outline of the views of Spofford and subsequent Librarians of Congress concerning the legislative

and national roles of the Library, see John Y. Cole, "For Congress & the Nation; the Dual Nature of the Library of Congress," *Quarterly Journal of the Library of Congress* 32 (April 1975): 118-38.

<sup>52</sup> February 5, 1868, Edward S. Morgan Papers, New York State Library, Albany.

<sup>54</sup> U.S. Congress, Joint Committee on the Library, *Special Report of the Librarian of Congress, December 3, 1895*, 54th Congress, 1st sess., Senate Doc. 7; U.S. Congress, *Use of Congressional Library. January 18, 1897*, 54th Cong., 2d sess., Senate Doc. 65.

<sup>55</sup> Herbert Putnam Papers, LC.







# John Russell Young

## *The Internationalist as Librarian*

by John C. Broderick

John Russell Young. The name *almost* sounds familiar, as if its owner were one of those Boston Brahmins who wrote sentimental-didactic poetry that everyone used to memorize.

On the contrary, Young was the farthest remove from the Boston Brahmins: an immigrant from Ireland who was brought to the United States in his infancy. His sickly father, who settled in Philadelphia, was a weaver unable to provide adequately for his family. After the death of Young's mother in 1851, the four surviving children were dispersed, Young becoming the ward of an uncle in New Orleans where he continued his meager formal schooling. He returned to Philadelphia at age 15 and apprenticed himself to another relative, who was a printer, and soon became able to gather his brother and sisters into one household, of which he was the chief support.

Thousands upon thousands of American boyhoods began this way in the 19th century, but, despite Horatio Alger, few were preliminary to an adult life spent in the highest circles of journalism, politics, business, and diplomacy. John Russell Young's life, however, followed unexpected and unpredictable patterns. For example, few thought of him in 1897 for the position of Librarian of

Congress. Rumors had Young accepting another diplomatic post or even a Cabinet appointment. Nevertheless, the appointment, when it came, seemed so eminently right that Young was confirmed the same day, a fact in which the new Librarian took special pride. His tenure was to be the briefest in the 175-year history of the Library of Congress, a scant 18 months, but it was hardly the least significant.

Materials for the study of Young's life are abundant. With their aid we may readily understand the course his life took, the ways in which the Librarianship was a culmination (as well as a personal disappointment), and even, as one of those New England poets put it, "what might have been."

Young apparently owed nothing to Ireland, where he was born November 20, 1840, the son of George and Eliza Rankin Young. He visited Ire-

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*John Russell Young as he appeared in 1897, shortly before assuming the position of Librarian of Congress. LC-USZ62-6011A*

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land only twice, in 1879–80, and may even have sought to obscure his Irish birth.<sup>1</sup> Of Scots lineage and Presbyterian background, he was not a typical “Irish” immigrant of the 1840’s. The Young family sailed to America in 1841 and settled first in Downingtown, Pa., moving three years later to Philadelphia, where Young began his education at the Harrison School.

Of many formative influences upon Young, four may be singled out: his mother; her New Orleans surrogate after her death, Mrs. Hagenbach; his mentor in journalism, John W. Forney; and the city of Philadelphia itself.

About Young’s mother, who died June 21, 1851, little is known except for her son’s recollections. Nearly 20 years after her death Young wrote in his diary, “That summer day is in my brain as yesterday.”<sup>2</sup> Eliza Young seems to have inspired in Young an extraordinary bookishness.<sup>3</sup> She may also have inculcated the driving ambition which was a large part of his character. No doubt the family dislocations that occurred after her death gave added significance and poignance to the event. When Young visited his birthplace, the village of Dunnamanagh in County Tyrone, his relatives remembered his mother as “a highly remarkable and superior woman.”<sup>4</sup>

In New Orleans Young became acquainted with a French instructor in his school, Mrs. Hagenbach, whose letters to Young, especially after his return to Philadelphia, set a high standard of accomplishment for the young man. Her letters are the earliest bits of correspondence in the John Russell Young papers in the Manuscript Division, and Young’s preservation of them for nearly 50 years indicates their importance to him. In retrospect, they seem oppressive and not entirely healthy—full of complaints about Young’s neglect and, later, disparagement of his adolescent interest in girls, which is made to seem disgraceful. On the positive side, the letters assume that there is no role which Young cannot fill—if he will only be selfless enough. In the earliest letter, December 12, 1854, after reproaching Young for his failure to write, Mrs. Hagenbach continues: “But a *cameleon* [i.e., Young, then 14 years old] never will make a useful or famed statesman—far from it, it can only become defamed in history; and by his contemporaries—and I will hope that mon Jean will not be the like—but become great in good-

ness—great for his own benefit which will consist as real greatness does—in the good he can do for his country and his fellow creatures in general.” The letter concludes: “O John become great.”<sup>5</sup>

Although the career which Mrs. Hagenbach forecast for Young was statesmanship, Young himself very early settled on journalism, to which his apprenticeship in his cousin’s print shop was more immediately allied. Early in 1856 Young apparently wrote to the famous editor Horace Greeley about how to prepare himself for a career as a newspaper editor and whether an opening existed on Greeley’s *New-York Tribune*. It was a natural enough question and, for a 15-year-old apprentice, indicated thoughtfulness as well as ambition. Greeley’s reply (May 13, 1856) was insufferable in its sanctimonious brutality. It read in part:

3. You seem to me to be laboring under the delusion that somebody’s favor . . . can be of material service to you. When you are older, you will realize that, under God, nobody but yourself can do you much good or favor.

4. I do not like the way you speak of your personal ties and associations. There seems to be a varnish of sentimentality covering an abyss of selfishness. Beware of it.”

In 10 years Young would be Greeley’s managing editor at the *Tribune*.

In August 1857 Young secured a position of copyboy on the *Philadelphia Press*, chiefly through his demonstrated ability to decipher editor John W. Forney’s crabbed hand. He almost immediately submitted a dramatic notice of a performance of *Richard III*, in which he pontificated on the work of various Shakespearean actors of the 19th century. Very shortly thereafter, he became a reporter and subsequently managing editor and editor of newspapers published in Philadelphia and Washington by Forney, who more and more valued Young’s ability. The association with Forney was fortuitous. Given widespread credit for the nomination of James Buchanan, Forney was just beginning his most influential decade when Young went to work for him. In addition to

*Young’s conscientiousness and precocious sense of responsibility for his family, even at age 16, are evident in a letter to his father and brother, October 1, 1857, written at 2 a.m. after a long night of work at the Philadelphia Press. LCMS-46584-1*

Philas October 10 1857  
 9 o'clock in the morning.

My Dear Father & Brother,

I am very sleepy. But I take these few moments before I go to bed to write you a few lines. Mary Ann arrived here <sup>yesterday</sup> day, and I was very much surprised to see her. I can assure you I was just getting up, when she arrived, although it was dinner-time. I am a late riser I can assure you, since I came to work for Col. Fomer. I was astonished to see Mary Ann here and no one along with her. I was hoping you had come, - and was sorry when I heard you had not. I hope, however to see you in a few days.

I am glad to hear of your success at House-keeping in St. Clair. Mary Ann has been telling me ever since she arrived, about her fine times, her nice cakes, her good bread, - and what a mischievous boy Jimmy is. I hope he will be good though.

Mary Ann is very anxious to go to  
 house keeping here. She wants me to  
 go and hire a house, and get Uncle  
 Jimmy Rankin. I won't do any such  
 a thing. I would not ask any thing  
 better than for us all to live together  
 once more. - but I do not want to depend  
 entirely on Uncle Jimmy, or on any body  
 else. I am not going to rent a house  
 till you come to town. You know  
 more about such matters than Mary  
 Ann, Uncle Jimmy, or I. You  
 have had experience which we have  
 not. You can get things cheaper, and  
 do ~~any~~ every thing better. You could  
 earn from 6 to 7 dollars a week,  
 I from 3 1/2 to 4 dollars, and between  
 us we can get along. Provisions  
 are getting cheaper, - and though  
 work is very <sup>scarce</sup> ~~dear~~ yet you can always  
 get something to do. Now is the time  
 to get a house, - get in coal and flour,  
 potatoes and provisions before the  
 winter comes in. Every day you lose  
 now, so much the more in the end.  
 I am sick and tired of boarding

and would get along twice as comfortable among my own friends and in my own home. I am in a good place to work at. Have <sup>steady</sup> a job, as long as I behave myself - and am getting along very well. All I want now is a home of our own, and the only way we can get that is by your coming to town right away and hiring a house. If you put it off two or three weeks winter will be on us, - and what then can we do?

I expect Uncle James Young of New Orleans home from Europe in a week or two, - and as he will stop in Philadelphia you could get some assistance from him. Mary Ann tells me you have no work in St. Clair, and I think you have a better chance of getting work here than in a small town like that. Mary Ann says you will come down on Saturday. I expect you on Tuesday, or Monday and if you do not come I shall feel disappointed. We can do nothing till you come. Mary Ann is running around no one's mind her, - I cannot, working



working as I do all night and half  
the day. Without some one to keep an  
eye on her, - what will she come to.

If you intend coming here, - and  
nothing would please me better. The cold  
weather is two or three weeks off, and  
we have hardly time to prepare for it.

I am sorry Jimmy is such an  
unruly boy, - if all Mary Ann tells  
me is true. I am sorry he does not  
treat his father with more respect. He  
will be better I hope, - and if he  
comes to town, see how good he can  
be. ~~Ella~~ Eliza is sick with the Croup.  
But I hope will <sup>soon</sup> recover. She sends her  
love to you all.

I am so sleepy, I cannot see to  
write. Come to Philadelphia soon,  
unless you are going to spend the winter  
near Pottsville. Write soon, and let Jimmy  
write, I can read his writing better. Mary  
Ann sends her love to you. So do all  
your friends. I am your sleep, affectionate  
son till death,  
John P. Young.

his printing empire, Forney served as Clerk of the House of Representatives 1851–57, 1860–61, and Secretary of the Senate 1861–68. In 1861 he founded the *Washington Chronicle*, of which Young was in charge for a time. By the time the Civil War broke out, Young was Forney's closest assistant and, because of Forney's legislative duties, soon in operational charge of his enterprises.

From Forney, whom he later described as "my first master,"<sup>7</sup> Young acquired fierce antislavery and pro-Union sentiments. Through Forney he gained access to national political and military leaders, including President Lincoln, to whom Forney was an adviser and confidant. Young also may have been misled by Forney's example into too secure an opinion about the power of the press, since Forney's political influence did not derive from his successful journalism, but rather vice versa.

Less easy to demonstrate but pervasive throughout Young's career was the sense that Philadelphia and the opinion of its leading citizens were the measure of a man's importance. After two days in New York City in 1859, Young wrote: "Glad I am home for after all, there is no comparison between the metropolis of Pennsylvania and that of New York."<sup>8</sup> Forty years later, after a career which centered in New York for many years, Young wrote in his diary (March 14, 1898): "N.Y. is nothing but a Babylon to me, & I leave it without any sentiment." Throughout his life Young was essentially a Philadelphian, maintaining business interests, club memberships, and life-long friendships in the city from which his career required him almost perpetually to absent himself.

Young first came to national attention through his account of the Confederate victory and Union retreat at the Battle of First Manassas (Bull Run), published in Forney's *Philadelphia Press* July 22, 1861. As an eyewitness observer, Young was able to give substance and credibility to his report through numerous human details:

As we drew nearer the field evidences of death were more striking. About half a mile from the immediate scene of hostilities the first shelter for the wounded had been obtained. A low, white frame house stood on the side of a road, covered with a few trees, surrounded by a garden of blooming roses, and neatly enclosed in rough white palings. It was the house of a plain Virginia farmer, but the necessities of war converted his home into an hospital. The well in front was guarded by sol-

diers. The chambers, the kitchen, the parlor, the porch, and the shade under the trees were occupied by wounded men, some moaning sadly, some bearing their agony in heroic silence, and others beseeching the doctor to place them out of the reach of pain, and occasionally one asking faintly for a cup of water. In the meantime the doctors ran hither and thither, binding, trepanning, amputating, probing, and soothing, assisted by the old Virginian, a blunt specimen of a son of the Old Dominion, who, assisted by his family, was assiduous to relieve the miseries of that fearful day. The soldiers had crawled round his well, and broken in his fences, and overrun his house. The flowers no longer bloomed in the garden, but, crushed and broken, they gave forth their fragrance under the bruising feet of the soldiers. Where the roses had grown in the morning dead men lay in noon."

There were many reputations in journalism made during the Civil War. The names of Whitelaw Reid and Charles C. Coffin come to mind. Young was just such a beneficiary as these.

With the increase of managerial and editorial responsibilities, Young's writing was limited to anonymous "leaders." However, he did some special reporting at times. In the spring of 1864 he traveled to Louisiana to report on Gen. Nathaniel P. Banks' ill-fated Red River campaign.<sup>10</sup> In that same year his industrial journalism for the *Press* was printed separately as *A Visit to the Oil Regions of West Virginia, Ohio and Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: Ringwalt & Brown, 1864).

In 1865, following a disagreement with Forney, Young was employed by the Philadelphia financier Jay Cooke, who had been appointed a fiscal agent of the Treasury Department to sell government securities at 7.30 percent (hence the designation of Cooke's "seven-thirties"). Young was one of several journalists employed to "put over" the sale, without which the national government faced fiscal crisis. Cooke's firm sold \$600 million worth of securities in less than six months in 1865, to supplement his disposal of \$500 million worth of securities earlier in the war. Young moved to New York to carry out his publicity work for Cooke and began to submit special articles to Greeley's *New-York Tribune* and attempt to crack the serious magazine market.<sup>11</sup> He had also helped found the *Philadelphia Morning Post*, in which he maintained a strong financial and editorial interest, to his eventual sorrow.

Changes in his family situation had reinforced Young's own natural ambitions to intensify his dreams of success and active pursuit of it. On

October 18, 1864, Young had married in Washington Rose Fitzpatrick, daughter of a longtime employee of the U.S. Senate. Their son "Johnny" had been born July 27, 1865. The marriage was to be marked by sadness. Until her death in 1881, Mrs. Young was frequently ill, and all three children of the marriage died in childhood.

Before the year 1865 was out, Young had earned a regular position on the *Tribune* staff and in mid-1866 he was named managing editor, succeeding Sydney Howard Gay, the first to bear that title, who had resigned because of ill health. Young thus became, at age 25, the operational head of one of the country's leading newspapers, in charge of a large staff that included such men as George Ripley, who had founded the Brook Farm transcendental community in Massachusetts before Young was born.

Despite his youth, Young was resolute and decisive as managing editor of the *Tribune* 1866-69. He was innovative and perceptive as well. He suggested that George W. Smalley become a permanent correspondent in London, a position Smalley was to occupy with great influence over the next 40 years. Young employed Henry M. Stanley as a travel writer and secured Samuel L. Clemens' sketches of the tour to the Holy Land, to be published in 1869 as *Innocents Abroad*. Thirty years later, after reading a biography of former *Tribune* writer Bayard Taylor, Young remarked in his diary (November 22, 1898): "How much I did for *The Tribune* & yet how much I am out of its history. It bears the impress I made upon it." Except for the passions released by the impeachment and trial of Andrew Johnson, Young might have continued his role at the *Tribune* and secured his rightful place in its history.

Young's antipathy toward President Andrew Johnson was almost instantaneous. On August 25, 1866, he wrote to John Hay that "the best of Presidents has been succeeded by the worst."<sup>12</sup> Over the next two years Young carried his opposition to the President to unreasonable lengths, overcoming admonitory restraints by Horace Greeley and his own initial caution. Young's first *Tribune* editorial on "The Impeachment of the President" appeared January 8, 1867, following introduction of articles of impeachment by Congressman William Ashley. Young thought impeachment complex and involved, likely to win sympathy for

Johnson, and uncertain in its sequel. Nevertheless, he did not oppose impeachment in January 1867; he merely urged caution. "Let us walk slowly, and survey the ground as we go." Later that month a Philadelphia friend, Sam Wilkeson, wrote: "*Impeachment is dead sure*. The *Tribune* will make a capital mistake if it opposes it."<sup>13</sup> As the year 1867 progressed, Young was less and less inclined to oppose impeachment. Moreover, Horace Greeley's frequent absences gave Young considerable freedom in use of the *Tribune* editorial columns.

On June 11, 1867, Young editorialized on "Reconstruction," an article which brought him a four-page letter from Chief Justice Salmon P. Chase, dated June 28. Chase was the *Tribune's* (certainly Greeley's) strong favorite for the Republican nomination in 1868 and the presidency. Chase took note of Young's abuse of President Johnson in the June 11 article but did not wish to comment in writing. "On this subject I should like to exchange views with you in a friendly talk." On the substantive questions, however, "I must say frankly that I see no ground for thinking that the President has not intended to carry out the Reconstruction Acts in good faith: or that the Attorney General has not honestly sought to ascertain & state their true meaning."<sup>14</sup>

Horace Greeley, meanwhile, in Albany for the New York state constitutional convention, was sending Young encouraging, but admonitory messages. "I have not written to direct you, because you were doing very well, and because too much dictation seems to me to take the courage out of almost any one. . . . I trust we shall be able to exert a good influence on the progress of Reconstruction."<sup>15</sup> Greeley was fixed in his opposition to Grant for President. "I don't want any man for President who *ever* gets drunk. Andy Johnson should suffice of that sort for at least fifty years yet."<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, he advised Young to use caution. "Get all the information you can about Johnson's projects and doings, but I would speak of them all with love, dignity and moderation. We must not destroy our ability to speak with power at the proper instant."<sup>17</sup> Early in September Greeley, still in Albany, wrote Young: "I would not go so far against Johnson that the Ashleys can quote us in pushing impeachment. Johnson is as useful to us as the devil is to Orthodox theology. We can't afford to get rid of him till we have elected our

President. Were he expelled from the White House, we should all be by the ears. Be wary on this point."<sup>18</sup> But Young was headstrong and determined to bring about impeachment. In mid-September Greeley had to veto an article favoring impeachment, already set in type. "Let it stand till we see more clearly what ought to be done. Nothing can be gained by printing it."<sup>19</sup> In November Greeley wrote: "Be careful not to let bitter things be said that will be quoted by the Obstructives at the South."<sup>20</sup> Despite these warnings, Greeley frequently in these months pronounced himself "more than satisfied" with Young's conduct of the *Tribune*.

Although Greeley's influence was restraining Young, others were egging him on. Two of these were Wendell Phillips and Speaker of the House Schuyler Colfax. Young would remember Phillips, the Brahmin abolitionist orator, as "in many respects the most charming figure I ever knew in public life."<sup>21</sup> He had illusions about Colfax ("there was nothing in Colfax but the franking privilege") or the self-interest which prompted his support of Young's radicalism. Nevertheless, he intrigued with Colfax and others in Washington to further impeachment. "Go ahead. We'll follow your plume," Phillips urged Young.<sup>22</sup> In January 1868 Phillips wrote, "You are leading the public thought & purpose grandly & have every morning our fresh thanks for your fidelity & fresh joy that your position makes it so effective."<sup>23</sup> From Colfax: "Your Editorials have rung like a trumpet throughout the land."<sup>24</sup> Daniel Sickles was another who thanked Young for the "powerful articles" in the *Tribune*.<sup>25</sup>

The year 1868 was crucial to the fortunes of the presidency, the nation, and John Russell Young. He began the year with the article "Concerning Popularity," which *Tribune* publisher Samuel Sinclair thought would cost 10,000 subscribers.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, on January 13 the *Tribune* stockholders met, reelected Greeley editor, and approved Young's management of the paper. Early in February Greeley went west for a month of lecturing. In his absence Young put the *Tribune* firmly into the impeachment camp with three editorial articles February 24, including one entitled simply "The President Must Be Impeached."<sup>27</sup> There was, he argued, "no avoiding this conclu-

sion . . . no explaining it away. There is no middle course." The President must be "swept out of office" for his "treachery."

Young found his "impeachment *coup d'etat*," as he designated it, "very successful," though he was "anxious to hear from Greeley."<sup>28</sup> He heard from others. Colfax wrote from Washington: "The *Tribune* is magnificent these days, thanks to your prompt & decided action. Its white plume is at the head of the column, just where I am delighted to see it. I have heard scores of eulogies on Monday's grand paper. Said a Member to me, 'Never did its bugle blast sound more cheerily to us all.'"<sup>29</sup>

From that point until the decision in the Senate in May, Young was unrelenting in his editorial onslaughts. He was in and out of Washington during the spring, to the extent that Greeley was "vexed" by his absence from New York. He was in the Senate gallery as the impeachment trial began, and, as the first crucial vote approached, he published "The Statesmanship of Impeachment," in which he argued:

It is therefore impossible to escape Impeachment. The Senate must convict Mr. Johnson, or assume the responsibility of his succeeding policy, and share with him the odium of his past career. The Republican Senators have voted a hundred times that he is an enemy of the country! Any Republican vote now, but one of Impeachment, is therefore a lie. . . . We could wish a unanimous vote on Impeachment, but the partisanship of the Democrats forbids it. So it becomes the high and solemn mission of the Republican party. . . . Impeachment is loyalty, patriotism, statesmanship. The Republican who votes against it seeks a lot with the men who have warred and plotted for the destruction of the Republic.<sup>30</sup>

Edwin M. Stanton wrote Young: "The hour of judgment is nigh at hand, and should the great criminal be condemned, the national deliverance will be due to you, more than any one else. Yours has been the White plume of Navarre."<sup>31</sup>

The "great criminal," of course, escaped condemnation by one vote, and thus Young was denied the coveted role of national deliverer, which leading actors in the impeachment drama assigned to him.<sup>32</sup> He took the news of the impeachment verdict on the first crucial vote "quite tranquilly being prepared therefor." His diary for the last two weeks of May, however, seems that of a sleepwalker. He fired one more salvo in the *Tribune*, "The Tainted Verdict," May 27, and



then subsided. His interest turned instead toward the nomination and election of Grant and Colfax, for whom, he wrote Adam Badeau, he was "doing all we can."<sup>33</sup>

In the midst of the impeachment crisis, Young took on a responsibility far removed from his daily journalistic routines. He was chairman of the committee arranging the great press dinner at Delmonico's April 18, 1868, in honor of Charles Dickens. Dickens' first visit to the United States in 1842 had led to his severe criticism of American manners and institutions (especially slavery) in his *American Notes* (1842) and a resulting paper warfare across the Atlantic. Twenty-five years later, however, almost all was forgiven, and the English novelist's widespread public readings in the United States (1867-68) were a financial bonanza, though in their strenuousness they may have shortened his life. (Dickens died June 9, 1870.) Planning and arranging the Dickens dinner took a great deal of Young's time in early 1868, its compensation lying in the opportunity to secure an intimate acquaintance with one of the great men of the 19th century, always a compelling motive for the hero-worshipping Young. The dinner itself was somewhat anticlimactic. Dickens, already feeling the effects of his rigorous tour, became ill and had to leave the dinner before its completion. His letters of thanks to Young, however, are genuine and authentic. His last words in the United States, reported by the *Tribune* staff member who accompanied the ship down the bay, were, "Tell Mr. Young I shall never forget his kindness."<sup>34</sup>

The most graphic account of Young's triumphant era as managing editor of the *Tribune* appears in two articles in *Packard's Monthly* in October and November 1868.<sup>35</sup> The author was Amos J. Cummings, city and political editor of the *Tribune*, who after his subsequent dismissal by Young was employed as the first managing editor of Charles Dana's *New York Sun* during the period when the *Sun* attacked Young at every opportunity. In 1868, however, Cummings was Young's subordinate, who professed to regard his chief as "a literary comet," though the tone of Cummings' description verges more than once toward disbelief and ridicule:

... What! this blue-eyed boy the Managing Editor of the most influential journal in America! You can hardly believe it. In personal appearance Mr. Young is the most insignificant person about the office. He is

light-complexioned, has a large, sloping head, thatched with brown hair, a clear forehead, and a prominent nose, and is as quick of motion as a sparrowhawk. He is of medium height—say five feet eight. His words flow from his lips in rapid succession, as if each one was struggling to get out of his mouth ahead of the other. And this man has flashed upon the journalists of New-York like a literary comet. Twelve years ago he was a printer's devil; when South Carolina sprouted into Secession he was a reporter in Philadelphia; one year more found him a Dramatic Critic on *The Washington Chronicle*; six years ago he was the Managing Editor of *The Philadelphia Press*; two years after this he was with General Banks during the Red River expedition; next we find him an agent of Jay Cooke's in 7.30 times. While at this business, in his leisure hours, he wrote editorials for *The Tribune*. They were unusually spicy and argumentative, attracted the attention of Mr. Greeley and Sidney Howard Gay, and now that printer's devil is a newspaper autocrat—the peer of statesmen, and a potent power in the land. At first sight he appears common-place, but when you talk with him, and partly fathom the depth of that wonderful blue eye, and the decisive cut of the nose and the mouth, you recognize an impress of a peculiar intellectual vitality, a fertility of resource, a quickness of comprehension, and a nervous energy, that stamps him as a steam-engine among newspaper men. His attire is neat, but not foppish. He wears one of those little round-topped hats, with a small, circular rim, and this increases his boyish appearance. His room is lined with books of reference. . . . Young writes by spasms. He pays strict attention to the business details of the office. Every letter, every bill, every rejected communication is filed. He is able to furnish, at a moment's notice, a filed voucher for every cent of expenditure during his administration. Such strict attention to business requires a vast amount of time. But when a great national emergency arises, especially during the absence of H. G., he throws himself into the breach with a characteristic energy, and the columns of *The Tribune* are red-hot with his short, sharp, ringing sentences, until the storm has passed. His were the stinging editorials on the Philadelphia Convention, his were the columns of invective poured over the Impeachment renegades, his were the fierce attacks upon the far-born movement to nominate Grant before the General had defined his position, and his are the showers of sarcasm launched upon John T. Hoffman. The phrase, "Impeachment is Peace," is Young's; so are the words "Let us have Peace." He it was who called Grant "a sashed and girded sphynx." He it was who wrote the brilliant book reviews on Buchanan's "Defence of his Administration," Greeley's "American Conflict," and Richardson's "Life of Grant." There are no lazy hairs in his head; each one seems to be inspired with electric energy. As Butler was the author of the word "Contraband," applied to the slaves of Rebels, so is Young the author of the word "Copperhead," as applied to the members of the Democratic party.<sup>36</sup>

Cummings goes on to comment upon Young as a disciplinarian. (Cummings' sport with a



Young edict against office profanity was apparently the root cause of his subsequent dismissal.) He continues with an account of a typical 2 p.m. editorial meeting, in which Young "nervously dances around his desk for forty seconds," and then takes up the items one by one, rebuking Cummings for letting the *World* get the better of the *Tribune* on a murder story, characterizing an Associated Press dispatch as "a Rebel lie," ordering a telegram sent in cipher to Smalley in London, instructing him to send a man to Romania to check on reports of an insurrection there. Despite the less than deferential handling of Young, Cummings concludes by acknowledging: "During the past two years the old readers of *The Tribune* have noticed a marked improvement in the paper. Its columns have grown more sparkling and fervent, and it has conducted the present Presidential campaign with an energy and skill heretofore unsurpassed."<sup>37</sup> The years referred to were simultaneous with Young's tenure as managing editor.

In mid-January 1869 Young went to Washington to take some soundings (engage in "chintz-music," as he phrased it) about the probable character of the Grant administration ("if I can fathom the mysteries of the inscrutable Ulysses"). He left Whitelaw Reid in charge of the *Tribune* during his absence as he had done with more and more frequency since Reid joined the New York office staff in September 1868. For some reason Young rather dreaded the trip and in a letter to Reid, January 17, 1869, reported that his preference would be to "instantly seek out the genial [A.R.] Spofford and drink Sherry wine with him in the alcoves of the Library [of Congress] . . . and read his immense black-letter books."<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless, he remained in Washington a full week and was well satisfied with Reid's handling of the *Tribune* during his absence. The paper had been "provokingly good," he wrote Reid. Early in February, Reid, perhaps grown accustomed to authority, took umbrage at an order by Young which he construed as a personal rebuke. Young, unfortunately, was insensitive to Reid's objection. "I have about a dozen vexations every calendar month to which it does not compare. And about which I never write."<sup>39</sup> Reid responded, and Young wrote again, in a somewhat more conciliatory way, but still rather stiff-necked. "Any additional assurance to my former note I cannot give.

That I only renew."<sup>40</sup> It was the beginning of an alienation that became embittered in the 1870's but which both men put behind them with the passage of time.<sup>41</sup> Reid, of course, assumed Young's duties later in the year and survived a fight for control of the *Tribune* following Greeley's death in 1872, eventually to establish Reid family control of the newspaper until its demise in 1966. There is no evidence to suggest that Reid was part of the "cowardly conspiracy" leading to Young's resignation, but he was its beneficiary, so much so that one is tempted to cast Reid and Young in the roles of Gilbert and Sullivan's "happy undeserving A" and "wretched meritorious B."

To do so would oversimplify and distort the situation. Young was victimized by circumstances, but his own arrogance and self-righteousness, exemplified in his onslaughts on Andrew Johnson the year before, prepared him for a fall. Young's power and authority to some extent went to his head. A young man, still in his twenties, he spoke easily of attacking Senators "severely," as he had instructed Reid about Senator Harlan the preceding year.

If Young was guilty of hubris, he was soon brought low enough to satisfy the most fastidious Aristotelian. Charles A. Dana's *New York Sun* for April 27, 1869, began the first in a month-long series of attacks on Young, which led to his resignation from the *Tribune* May 19. In the April 27 issue, four and a half columns were devoted to publication of some of Young's private correspondence, largely to a Philadelphia friend, Charles McClinck, with interspersed commentary. The charges against Young were that he subverted the *Tribune* office, replacing veteran staff members with his own Philadelphia entourage (including his brother, who "was given the Washington plum" at \$3,000 per annum); that he surreptitiously sent Associated Press dispatches received by the *Tribune* to the *Philadelphia Morning Post*, which was not entitled to them; that he used the influence of the *Tribune* to benefit the *Post*; and that he generally intrigued against his employers, whom he characterized as "old fogies," including *Tribune* publisher Samuel Sinclair. The commentary and headlines were pointed and personal. Young was called "the Richelieu of the press." His head was said to be "phrenologically well developed in the region of secretiveness and rather low in the vicinity of

cautiousness." According to the *Sun*, Horace Greeley had been shown the letters April 23, four days before publication. Three weeks later the *Sun* would contend that if Greeley had then signified an intention to control Young, the letters would not have been published.<sup>42</sup>

Young retaliated by having Dana arrested and instituting a \$100,000 libel suit against Dana, with similar actions against newspapers which reprinted the *Sun's* dispatches. Although the suits were not brought to trial, he later consoled himself with the fact that he had "silenced" Dana, but his days were numbered at the *Tribune*.<sup>43</sup> The suits themselves merely provided the *Sun* with additional copy for this journalistic thrice nine-days' wonder. The *Sun* published 17 articles, editorials, and dispatches on the Dana-Young controversy over the next month. Even after Young's resignation from the *Tribune*, the *Sun* pursued him for more than a decade, referring to him usually as the "sneak news thief," attacking Young's short-lived *New York Standard* (1870-72) as "Thieves' Own," and ridiculing James Gordon Bennett for employing Young as a foreign correspondent.<sup>44</sup>

The *Sun* attacks on Young were in keeping with roughneck personal journalism of the era, smack of New York newspaper rivalries (Dana also attacked Greeley and Reid), and have a political dimension as well, Dana generally opposing Grant and Young then emerging as his chief defender. Some of Young's correspondence printed in the *Sun* could be called the exuberant indiscretions of youth. Nevertheless, there is much that cannot be explained away despite Young's longtime hostility to the Associated Press as a "copperhead" organization and his contention that AP's refusal to include the *Philadelphia Post* in its network constituted a monopoly on a commodity of general public value—the news. Young blundered badly and was too proud and sensitive to ride out the storm.<sup>45</sup>

Although Young secured backing to launch the *Standard*, chiefly from Benjamin Butler, and sought to keep it alive to provide U. S. Grant with journalistic support in New York City, it was a "desperate" venture and doomed from the outset. Young also fostered an American Press Association, of which he was for a time president, as an alternative to the Associated Press, but this too made little headway. His own Philadelphia business affairs were not prospering, and Young in

1870 was undoubtedly at low ebb.<sup>46</sup> He reached 30 that year and, except for the height from which he had fallen, had many assets for the future, not least of which was his growing friendship with President Grant.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, Young was on the verge of a decided shift in the ordinary routines of his life.

Young's two decades of predominantly foreign residence began in 1871, when he undertook a confidential mission to Europe for Secretary of State Hamilton Fish concerning the settlement of the Alabama claims. He was therefore once again in the right place at the right time to witness a historic event, the fall of the French Commune in late May 1871. Young wrote a lengthy, widely admired dispatch for his *New York Standard*<sup>48</sup> and the following year began a long-term association with the *New York Herald* that finally ended only with his death. Throughout the mid-1870's Young was chiefly in Paris, London, Vienna, and Madrid, but his duties and travels took him across Europe for the next five years. In 1876 he was back in the United States, spending the early months in the South and mid-1876 in New York and Philadelphia (July 4 in Philadelphia, of course). By late September, however, he was on his way back to London.

Once more Young was well situated. It was natural that he should give a press dinner in London for former President Grant when that old friend and dignitary arrived in June 1877. And it was equally natural that Grant should invite his friend to accompany him on the extensive travels he was just beginning. It was a journalistic coup for Young and the *Herald*, but Young's service to Grant would be at least equal to the opportunity. As Young's former *Tribune* colleague, George W. Smalley, wryly remarked, Grant captivated "the

*The rivalries of New York editors and publishers were caricatured in an 1870 cartoon in Punchinello, which depicted the editorial disputes as washday squabbles. On the right, Charles A. Dana of the Sun shakes his fist in the face of a rather passive John Russell Young of the Standard. On the left, Manton Marble of the World glares at George Jones of the Times, the two separated by Horace Greeley of the Tribune. In the background, Hugh J. Hastings of the Commercial Advertiser seems oblivious to the baneful glance of Theodore Tilton of the Independent. LC-USZ62-34334*



supremacy" at silence, Grant could be very talkative about his favorite subjects.

The book is at its liveliest in description of the American expatriate, especially in Paris and London where Young had observed him for several years. Occasionally Young will break into his travel narrative with a witty sketch, as in the following account of a 19th-century Kilroy:

It was here [Karnac] we came across the tracks of the name-writing donkey. There are traces of the animal in other parts of the world, but in Egypt they reach the highest form of development. The stone is soft, and travelers who come here have time to spend, and it is only an hour or two to cut your name deep in the stone which for thirty centuries has borne the story of a nation's power. You look at a fine range of carving and follow the story of the legend, and suddenly you are arrested by some name hacked in the walls—Brown, or Smith, or Thompson. These inscriptions go back, some of them, a long time. There are Greek names that belong to the days of the Lower Empire. I saw many French names, belonging to the expedition of Bonaparte in 1799, twenty at least, especially on top of the pylon at Et Foo. One name, "John Gordon, 1804," is frequently repeated. I suppose John Gordon has answered for his sins by this time, and let us hope that the recording angel reminded him of the way he hacked the walls at Luxor and Denderah. But the greatest donkey of the tribe—the monumental donkey of the age—is "Powell Tucker" of New York. If Powell Tucker reads these lines he will learn that his name is the theme of repeated execrations throughout Egypt. Powell, as the story goes, did not content himself with carving his name on the walls—that, perhaps, would have been too much trouble. So he carried a sailor with him, and this sailor had a pot of black paint and a brush. Whenever Powell came to a monument the sailor painted in large black letters, "Powell Tucker, New York, 1870." Sometimes it is only "P. T.," but the tracks are here and there all over Egypt. The authorities in charge of the antiquities have tried to rub out this and other marks of vandalism. But Powell's sailor painted deep, and we voted unanimously that America was again in the ascendant; that whatever the American did he excelled the world, and that in a country where you see the name-writing donkey of all species—Greek, Arab, French, Italian, British—the monumental name-writing donkey of the age is Powell Tucker of New York. I hope Powell is alive, that he may enjoy this well-earned fame. I would like to see him—to look at him—to see with my own eyes a gentleman who could wander through this land of beauty, fable, and historic renown—this land of temples and tombs—and here, where generations of a forgotten age had in patient faith and humility carved the legends of their faith and their history—there, in the sanctuary where the gods were worshiped, to have a sailor, with a pot of black paint, to smear his name! Let us all be proud of Tucker. In his own department of usefulness as a name-writing donkey he has given America a conceded although scarcely an enviable renown.<sup>53</sup>

Young's style, as the excerpt above indicates, is clear and dry, but not clinically so. Before the ruins at Karnac or the Taj Mahal his rhetoric is equal to the impressive occasion. *Around the World* easily avoids the guidebook clichés of much travel literature of the 19th century and their opposite, the bumptiousness of Mark Twain's contemporaneous *A Tramp Abroad*. With more time for its preparation, Young might well have recognized and improved the prosaic patches and brought the work to a level consistent with that of its best parts.

The trip with Grant was, in Young's final estimation, "an experience that one can never hope to see again." It would in time affect his life and his career immeasurably. But, in the meantime, he had to get on with both.

It was Young's custom to write in the flyleaf of his pocket diaries his various addresses for the year. Often these were numerous. The list in the 1879 diary concludes: "And around the world." It was literally true. He began the year in London before setting out on the Asian travels with Grant. The party returned to the United States in September, and Young remained for a month in California, at the end of which he received word of his father's death in Philadelphia. He proceeded east, arriving in Philadelphia October 18. During the next month he worked furiously at his book, but by Thanksgiving day he was at sea again, on his way to England. He spent 10 days in Paris, conferring with Bennett, but he ended the year where he began it—in London.

Young was homesick. Mrs. Young had not accompanied him on his travels with Grant, and she had remained in Philadelphia when he returned to Europe in late 1879. In the early spring of 1880, Young was able to send her word that he was "coming home," James Gordon Bennett having approved his reassignment to New York. Before going, perhaps under the mistaken assumption that his international travel was drawing to a close, he went to Ireland "on a visit I have often wanted to make to the homes of my ancestors."<sup>53</sup> He visited various villages in Northern Ireland, met numerous uncles and cousins, and heard their recollections of his mother and father. That venture over, he embarked for the United States.

In September Young's third child died. Her mother meanwhile had contracted malaria in Cali-



fornia, where Young had hoped to establish some business interests. Rose Fitzpatrick Young died in New York January 4, 1881, before her 40th birthday. Hers had been a difficult life beset by illness, long separations from her husband, and the loss of all three of her children.<sup>54</sup>

Young resumed his international career in mid-1882, returning to the Far East as United States minister to China. More than a year earlier, former President Grant had urged his appointment to a diplomatic mission. In a letter to President-elect James A. Garfield, February 18, 1881, Grant spoke of Young specifically as minister to Japan: "The United States has a grand mission in the East and Mr. Young is the best equipped man in America to commence it."<sup>55</sup> Grant's interest was genuine, in the mission as well as the man. His views on the Orient, as Young had made them widely known in *Around the World With General Grant*, were welcome in the Eastern capitals since Grant emphasized amity between China and Japan as a means of avoiding oppression by foreign nations, especially European. One diplomatic historian attributes to Young "the creative force" behind Grant's views on policy in eastern Asia, views so enlightened and in advance of events that Grant's failure to secure the presidency in 1880 meant that "American policy in the Far East suffered a distinct and even deplorable loss."<sup>56</sup>

Despite Grant's urging, President Garfield did not act upon the recommendation, and it was left to his successor, Chester A. Arthur, to enlist Young in the diplomatic service by a ministerial appointment March 15, 1882.<sup>57</sup> Ten days later *Harper's Weekly* hailed the appointment. "The nomination and prompt confirmation of Mr. John Russell Young as United States Minister to China is a compliment to one of the most brilliant of American journalists, and has promptly evoked the commendation of the press of the country irrespective of party. . . . Mr. Young's appointment is one eminently fit to be made."<sup>58</sup>

On April 25 Young remarried. His second wife was Julia Coleman, whom he described as "the most accomplished and beautiful woman I have ever known."<sup>59</sup> The bride, the niece of wealthy former Connecticut governor Marshall Jewell, was 22 years old. Young was 41.

Young reached China in late summer after a

long stopover in Japan. Julia Young was frequently ill during the first year of her marriage, a condition attributed to the Asiatic climate. Early in the new year it was decided that she should go to Paris to await the birth of their child, expected in the summer of 1883. Young accompanied her to Shanghai, and on April 19 she sailed for Marseilles and Young returned to his post at the American legation in Peking. On August 2 he received a dispatch informing him of the birth of a son, who a subsequent message from James Gordon Bennett assured him was a "fine boy." Mrs. Young did not prosper, however, and by mid-October fell dangerously ill. She died in Paris October 22, age 24. The body was returned to Hartford for funeral services, and the boy, Russell Jewell Young, was placed in the care of his mother's family in that city.

Despite these personal griefs, Young was an active minister, one whose role was strengthened by the esteem in which he was held by high officials of both China and Japan, especially Li Hung Chang, principal viceroy of China, who had been Young's friend and correspondent since the 1879 visit with Grant. Almost simultaneously with Young's arrival in China, there was an international incident, the gravity of which Young realized and sought to convey to the Department of State. In July and August 1882 uprisings by Korean soldiers in Seoul resulted in the burning of the Japanese legation and the flight of its members. The uprising was quickly quelled, but the Japanese sought an indemnity of \$500,000 as redress. They sought it, moreover, by a treaty with the king of Korea, traditionally bound in loyalty to the Chinese emperor. A separate treaty with Korea had a precedent in that which Commodore Robert Shufeldt had negotiated May 23, 1882, and which was before the Senate for ratification as Young took up his duties.

In a long dispatch to Secretary of State Frelinghuysen, October 2, 1882, Young delineated the subtleties of the situation in almost prophetic terms:

Whether Corea is a dependency or a sovereignty, China can never look without natural apprehension upon any infringement of her territorial integrity. The maps will show the military importance of Corea. A Russian or a Japanese army in that country would be a grave menace to China.<sup>60</sup>



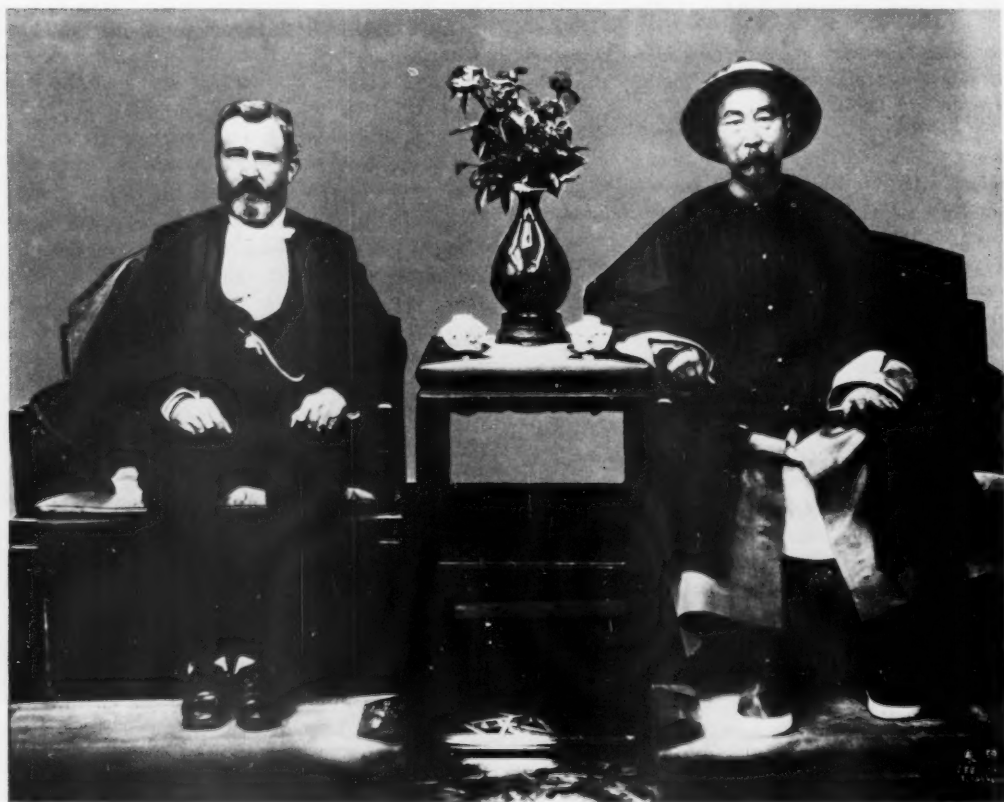
He urged the United States to persuade Japan to modify the language of its treaty to acknowledge the special relationship between Korea and China.

Young also used his office effectively during the dispute between France and China in 1884, but for the most part his service in China involved protection of some American business interests, discouragement of opium traffic, and furthering westernization in China. Nevertheless, one diplomatic historian gives Young extremely high marks:

All things considered, it is fair to describe John Russell Young as among the three or four most competent American diplomatic representatives in the Far East in the nineteenth century. Although cast by the circumstances for a minor part he was the peer of Caleb Cushing at Macao, and he had a world wide political view far superior to that of either Burlingame or Townsend Harris. All his experience previous to his services in Peking had

contributed to make him a really finished diplomat. His trained powers of observation and his skill as a reporter, added to rare literary ability, made his despatches rank among the best received at Washington. His long political career had developed a sense which served him well in a court enveloped in political intrigue. His journalistic and editorial experience, and his tour of the world with General Grant, put him well at ease in the field of diplomacy. Finally, the remarkable reception given to General Grant in Peking and Tokio, together with the intimate and very cordial personal relations established by both Grant and Young, enabled Young to go to his post in Peking already more familiar with the pressing problems than was usual in those days or even later.<sup>61</sup>

Following Grover Cleveland's election, Young resigned because, as he later explained to the President, a post "so important as this, should be filled by one, who possesses your entire confidence.—Upon this, I have no claim, as I do not know you personally.— and I am not a politician,



but a journalist."<sup>62</sup> He left China in the spring of 1885 and returned to the United States, resuming his connection with the *Herald*. The year 1886 found Young in England for several months, but he returned to Philadelphia in the fall, only to end the year seriously ill. The year 1887 was a rarity for Young, spent entirely within the geographical limits of the United States. These years immediately following his service in China had no particular focus as Young sought to resume his journalistic career and pursue some business schemes. His inner life was restricted to concern for his sister Mary (Mrs. John Blakeley of Philadelphia) and her seven children. He also managed to visit Hartford periodically to see his son, Russell.

In late November 1888 Young returned to Europe, primarily to assist in the establishment of a London edition of the *New York Herald*, of which it was expected that Young would be editor.<sup>63</sup> The Paris edition of the *Herald* was thought to be costing James Gordon Bennett \$100,000 a year, but he was ready to launch a London edition as well.<sup>64</sup> Young wanted to proceed to London quickly, but Bennett detained him in Paris until late January 1889, less than a week before the first issue of the London edition would be published. As a consequence, the beginnings of the newspaper were disorganized. After a week or 10 days of furious effort, Young predictably fell ill and was confined to his rooms for a week or more. Young remained abroad throughout 1889, principally in London, but in mid-October he was recalled to Paris. From late January to early May 1890 he and his fiancée, Mrs. May (Dow) Davids, were the guests of James Gordon Bennett on a tour of the Riviera, the Mediterranean, the Suez Canal, the Red Sea, and the Indian Ocean. Young returned to the United States in late May 1890, ending 20 years of extensive travels in Europe, Africa, and Asia.

Young resigned from the *Herald* November 4, and on November 18 at New York's Astor House took as his third wife, Mrs. Davids. Their son, Gordon Russell Young, born December 14, 1891,

*Former President Ulysses S. Grant and Chinese viceroy Li Hung Chang during Grant's visit to Tientsin, May and June 1879. Young's friendship with the two international figures did much to determine the shape of his career.*  
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was to become a prominent military engineer and a commissioner of the District of Columbia.

Young thus arrived at age 50 (November 20, 1890), having distinguished himself in journalism and diplomacy. He was not in good health and had put on weight over the years, nearing 200 pounds. Whereas he had seemed surprisingly young for the responsible positions he held in the 1860's, he aged rapidly in his middle years. About this time (January 28, 1889) Walt Whitman described Young to Horace Traubel as "lymphatic—of course not thin: rather stout, brisk, compact—it might be said, a strong man. . . . Young was of the [Edmund] Gosse type—is still, I suppose: combed, cleaned, polished, brushed, exact." Traubel asked if Young lacked finesse. Whitman replied: "Hardly: I had reference to the outer man—the social man. Gosse is eminently scholar—all scholar: the university man: all refined, bookish, made up. Young was not so developed: not in that direction: had more native grit."<sup>65</sup>

In the 1890's Young resumed his place in Philadelphia. He had given up his regular position with the *New York Herald* though he continued to write extensively for Bennett's newspaper to the end of his life. He was able now to contribute more effectively to the *Philadelphia Evening Star*, the Young family newspaper, and to other outlets. Within a year of his return to Philadelphia he took a leading position in the Union League and shortly thereafter achieved the pinnacle of social success, the League presidency. And in the summer of 1898—in the midst of his tenure as Librarian of Congress—Young was under some Republican party pressure to run for mayor of Philadelphia.<sup>66</sup>

In 1892 Young served as a director of the Union League of Philadelphia, in the formation of which 30 years earlier he had been the youngest of the founding members. At the end of that year he was elected president of the League for 1893 and a year later was reelected. Young's elevation to the presidency of the influential, though not yet venerable, Philadelphia institution signified his acceptance by the established and socially and financially prominent. On the day he assumed the presidency, Young wrote in his diary: "Feel a sense of deep responsibility. The honor as great as one could have in a social sense in Philadelphia. I could not hope for more."<sup>67</sup>

The Union League had been formed in the

closing weeks of 1862 when concerned Northerners had reason to doubt that the fragile Union would survive Confederate military victories crowding in succession upon their ill-prepared consciousness. Its first article of association defined the condition of membership as "unqualified loyalty to the government of the United States, and unwavering support of its efforts for the suppression of the Rebellion."<sup>68</sup> At its organizing meeting the charter members briefly considered whether membership in the Republican Party itself should not be a requirement. While other Democrats and former Democrats, including Young's mentor, John W. Forney, sat silent, Daniel Dougherty objected: "Not for me! Not for me! I am for the Union—not for any Republican President." A compromise was reached, in which support of the Union was the sole condition of membership. Young later wrote that he considered the speech by Judge J. I. Clark Hare in support of the compromise position "the foundation of the Union League."<sup>69</sup>

This ancient controversy surfaced 30 years later on the very night of Young's election to the League presidency. The date was December 12, 1892, little more than a month after Grover Cleveland's election to a second term over the incumbent, Benjamin Harrison. Many believed that Harrison's defeat was due to Republican defections. And some defections had apparently occurred even in the party bastion, the Union League of Philadelphia.

At the 1892 meeting a resolution was introduced to require members to sign the following pledge:

I am a Republican. My political sentiments and principles are in harmony with the national policy as advanced by the Union League. I voted the Republican ticket at the preceding national election. If I change my politics I will at once resign my membership; and in the event of my not doing so, and sufficient proof is adduced that I have broken this pledge, The Union League is hereby authorized to expunge my name from the roll.<sup>70</sup>

After considerable debate the question was referred to a special committee for report at the 1893 meeting, as it could not be acted on earlier because of provisions of the League by-laws.

The 1893 annual meeting—the first over which Young presided—was one of the stormiest in the League's history and one of the most far-reaching

in its implications. The special committee offered a resolution in these terms:

Candidates for membership must be of good character and repute, and politically affiliated with the Republican party, and in harmony with its principles as recognized and supported by The Union League. Failure at any time, after the admission to membership, to maintain these qualifications shall subject the member to suspension, as hereinafter provided for acts or conduct hostile to the objects of the League.<sup>71</sup>

The heated and acrimonious debate which followed lasted more than two hours. Civil War veteran Gen. Louis Wagner, former commander-in-chief of the G.A.R., spoke for the committee. He made no attempt to conceal his contempt and ridicule for the opposition. When some lawyers present raised technical objections, General Wagner replied that he did not know that any members of his committee were lawyers. "Probably it was for that reason we were so unanimous, so prompt and so effective in the conclusion we reached—probably, I say." When another member sought to interrupt, Wagner remarked: "Patience, brother, patience! . . .—if a man who is not a lawyer dare call a member of the bar 'brother.'" The basis for the grievance was made quite evident in the remarks of another member who complained of "gentlemen who had been admitted as Republicans, and who had declared that they were Republicans," who nevertheless announced their pleasure that Cleveland had been elected, "glad of that which had put sorrow in the hearts of at least nine tenths of our membership." He urged adoption of the resolution so that "if gentlemen differed with the majority of this League, let them keep their feelings to themselves and not flaunt them around here in the faces of others." According to the minutes, the remark was followed by "long-continued applause."

Toward the end of the debate, one courageous defector, George Gluyas Mercer, took the floor.

*For the commemorative photograph of the reunion at Gettysburg, April 1893, Young stands at the left in stovepipe hat and light, rather rumpled overcoat beside one-armed Gen. O. O. Howard. General Longstreet, with full white sideburns, stands in the position of prominence at the center. Major General Daniel Sickles, who lost his leg at Gettysburg, is seated beside him. At the far left, leaning on his umbrella, is the governor of Pennsylvania, Robert Pattison. LCMS-46584-2*

His appearance was greeted with catcalls and abuse. The minutes record the scene as follows: "(Note.—Here the expressions of disapprobation from the audience which accompanied the speaker's remarks swelled into a volume of cries of 'The question,' 'Sit down,' and hisses.)" <sup>72</sup> His next attempt was met by "Prolonged cries of disapprobation."

Despite the tenor of the meeting and the majority sentiment in behalf of the resolution, the vote did not reach the necessary two-thirds. A change of only 18 votes out of a total of about 500 would have provided the necessary margin. After the failure to adopt General Wagner's stringent resolution, the League unanimously approved a watered-down version, "that the Directors ought not to admit to membership any applicant not politically affiliated with the Republican party."<sup>73</sup> In the words of the League historian, the compromise principle, although never made part of the bylaws, "has been adhered to ever since."<sup>74</sup>

Young's conduct of the meeting was firm and fair, and, although he cannot be said to have main-

tained order, the character of the meeting was such that it probably could not have been kept in stricter control. Once the membership question was disposed of, Young relinquished the chair for the remainder of the long evening, at the conclusion of which his reelection was announced by the largest vote in League history to that time. Although Young was no longer the arrogant doctrinaire of the 1860's, it is impossible to understand him fully outside the context of a fierce and sometimes savage partisanship for the Republican cause, of which the Union League debate is an example.

Despite the satisfactions and tributes which his presidency of the Union League brought him, Young himself was undoubtedly most gratified in these years by the two-day 30th anniversary reunion at Gettysburg of Confederate and Union officers in April 1893.<sup>75</sup> It was, as the *New York Times* (May 1, 1893) acknowledged, a decidedly personal triumph:

The party was brought together by John Russell Young, and it is doubtful whether any other man in the country





could have gathered together so many persons living at remote points and representing so many varied interests. The Pennsylvania Railroad placed a special train at Mr. Young's disposal, including a hotel car and a combination baggage and smoking car, under the personal charge of Mr. J. P. McWilliams of its passenger department.

General James Longstreet was the central figure of the gathering, but Generals O. O. Howard, E. P. Alexander, William Mahone, D. McMurtrie Gregg, Daniel Sickles, Pennsylvania Governor Robert E. Pattison, and many other lesser known military men made up the party of 40. In his diary for April 28, Young wrote: "Never had a more interesting day & this the end of so much negotiation, pulling & hauling." The second day's activities were somewhat curtailed by a rainstorm, but a commemorative picture was taken, in which Young, standing between General Howard and Governor Pattison, looks as "tired" as his diary entry for that day (April 29) revealed him to be.

The excursion to Gettysburg was facilitated by Young's position as president of the Union League and a vice president of the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad. Before the year was out, however, changes at the Reading led to Young's departure, and he faced the new year with his customary anxieties. "I have had more cares than usual," he wrote in his diary December 31, "& perhaps never entered a new [year] with more anxiety. The gap in my affairs from the Reading overthrow has been a serious one. But I have done the best. I have many reasons for gratitude to God. . . . I look forward with hope—without fear."

In addition to his journalism and activities associated with the Union League, Young was occupied in the mid-1890's with several publishing projects. The most ambitious was the two-volume memorial history of Philadelphia, which he edited.<sup>76</sup> The first volume, which appeared in 1895, was dedicated to Robert Todd Lincoln "with the friendship and esteem of the editor." Young also contributed a 16-page introduction to James P. Boyd's biography of James G. Blaine, published in 1893.<sup>77</sup> Throughout the period plans were also afoot for a chronicle of the Union League, which Young had planned as chairman of the League committee on publication. Like many of his enterprises, this work reached print after his death, and with the signs of his paternity obscured.<sup>78</sup> Young also began to lay plans and

make preparations for a biography of Ulysses S. Grant, an occupation of a decade, according to his estimate.

A visit to Mexico in late 1895 and early 1896 had serious consequences. He returned to Philadelphia February 8, 1896, "very ill." He was convalescent for nearly two months, in the midst of which his doctor died. By early April Young was well enough to travel to Hartford and New York to see his son Russell confirmed in the Congregational Church. Later that month he was in Harrisburg for the Republican state convention, which endorsed four reform bills prepared by a special committee, of which Young had been chairman, bills providing civil service for state and local governments.

The year 1896 was, of course, a national election year, one in which the Republicans expected to resume their stewardship of the presidency as they had regained control of Congress in 1894. Throughout the spring the candidacy of William McKinley gained momentum. Young wrote in his diary (May 5): "The McKinley movement seems a land slide. I cannot comprehend it, except upon grounds that one cannot but regret in politics." The grounds were the influence of wealth, and Young's hope was that a vice-presidential nominee would be chosen acceptable to the Grant faction of the party.

For 10 days in mid-June, while the Republican national convention met in St. Louis, Young was in Canton, Ohio, where he was entertained by McKinley and had several private talks with the Ohio governor. Although characteristically acerbic about the place ("There is nothing in Canton but the air"), Young secured a better opinion of McKinley and described him as "the best type of the eminent American." McKinley's opinion of Young was also high. The approaching election and its consequences, therefore, were of great interest to Young, not merely as an influential practicing journalist, but as an adviser and confidant of those in the highest party circles. In addition, his younger brother, James Rankin Young, was not only to make his first race for Congress successfully later that year but to lead the Republican ticket in Pennsylvania.

Before the election, however, there occurred the kind of ceremonial occasion in which Young found repeated delight. His old friend Li Hung Chang,



principal viceroy of China, made a formal visit to the United States on his return from the coronation of Czar Nicholas II. In tribute to Young, Li consented to be entertained at the Union League as well as to make a private and informal visit to Young's own home. Young went to New York City to meet Li on August 28. The following day he was present at the home of W. C. Whitney in honor of Li, a gathering which included President Cleveland, several Cabinet members, and former ministers to China. On August 30 Young assisted Mrs. Grant in a reception for Li. Two days later he accompanied Li to West Point. On September 3 Li visited Philadelphia, seeing Independence Hall and attending a reception at the Union League, in addition to making his private visit with Young and his wife and their son Gordon.

McKinley's election in November brought about profound changes in Young's way of life, some immediate and some remote. By February 1897 he had made Washington his base of operations (though not his residence) for his special articles for the *New York Herald* and the *Philadelphia Evening Star*. Until the President-elect took office in March, there would be intense speculation about appointments. Young himself was among those frequently mentioned. In his diary for February 22, he wrote: "All manner of rumors about my going into the cabinet." The Philadelphia newspapers reported that Young was under consideration as assistant secretary of state, secretary of the navy, and as a minister to one or more countries. Young himself would have liked to be named minister to Spain, which he knew well, a post earlier held by literary men, Washington Irving and James Russell Lowell. However, he was apparently thought of diplomatically only in connection with a return to China, which did not attract him.

On January 21, 1897, Young recorded in his diary receipt of "a very important communication from Mr. McKinley." Such a communication is not present in the Library's McKinley papers or Young papers, but about this time Henry Watterson, Alexander McClure, and James M. Carson, among others, were pressing Young's claims upon McKinley. Nevertheless, Young was not to receive an appointment before organization of the new government in March. On May 4 Young called on the President, who "said that he would have

an important nomination very soon:—namely that of the Librarian of Congress.—Would like to nominate Mr Spofford, but was afraid he could not—I presume he had me in mind,—but I made no suggestion.— Would rather be paralyzed than in any way disturb Spofford.—" <sup>79</sup> Spofford's well-known mishandling of Library accounts (which Young would later hear characterized as "criminal neglect") effectively prevented his appointment. Over the next few weeks Young satisfied himself that Spofford was not a possible candidate, and by June 1 his own own appointment was expected. It came June 30, and the Senate confirmed the new Librarian the same day. Young took great satisfaction in the immediate confirmation, which he believed to be "unprecedented." The newspaper accounts of Young's appointment were followed by the printing of a face-saving letter from Spofford to the President, dated June 28, 1897, disavowing his own candidacy to continue in the position.

John Russell Young was Librarian of Congress from July 1, 1897, until his death January 17, 1899, long enough to prepare two annual reports, issued in December 1897 and 1898, respectively, and covering Library developments through the preceding June 30. (In fact, the reports covered many developments occurring up to the date of writing, which in those days was very shortly before publication.) Young was better satisfied with the first report than the second, which was more a "record" than an "anticipation."

Both reports together provide evidence of the Young way of dealing with things and touch on six fundamental aspects of Young's Librarian-ship: the administrative transition, relocation of the library, appointments, reorganization, development of the collections, and innovative steps by the new Librarian.

After a few months in office Young concluded, "All of the antecedent affairs appear in confusion," <sup>80</sup> but his public references to his predecessor showed forbearance. The muddled state of copyright finances is papered over thus: "Amount of copyright fees reported by Mr. Spofford from July 1, 1896, to April 30, 1897, with receipts for May and June estimated, no accounts therefor having been rendered." <sup>81</sup> In his diary (March 3, 1898), on the other hand, after a conversation with Secretary of the Treasury Lyman Gage and

Representative Alexander Dockery, Young reported the impression (whether his or Dockery's is not clear) that Spofford's handling of Library appropriations for 1896 and 1897 had been "criminal neglect." Nor was he satisfied with the Library's holdings. The collections of the Library constituted "a good working library of authorities" but not "a universal library" capable of "satisfying the wants of scholars." Nevertheless, he acknowledged that Spofford had "long striven in vain for appropriations to secure [the Library's] natural growth."<sup>82</sup> Young always treated Spofford with the respect due an old friend and predecessor in office, but he left no doubt in the minds of the staff that a new administrative day had dawned in the Library of Congress.<sup>83</sup>

The tenure of John Russell Young as Librarian will always be associated with the opening of the elegant Washington landmark which to many is "the" Library of Congress. The story of its construction has been told elsewhere.<sup>84</sup> It had been expected that the relocation of the Library holdings from the Capitol to the new building would occur between March 4 (the customary beginning of a long congressional adjournment) and July 1, 1897. The first session of the 55th Congress, however, began March 15 and continued until July 24, 1897. As a consequence, the move was delayed. The old Library closed a week after congressional adjournment, except for copyright business. The relocation of the books was the occupation of virtually the entire staff over the next three months. The new Library opened to the public November 1, although some work was still in progress on the building and its contents. In his 1897 *Report* (p. 6) Young paid tribute to "the care, foresight, and industry of the staff" which not only permitted movement of the Library's "manifold and various treasures" in 10 weeks, but did so "without the loss or apparent misplacement of a volume."

Things were not quite as rosy as the *Report* implied. For example, there had been a robbery in the Law Library in mid-August. Young was also still much concerned about the theft of manuscripts in early 1896 by two employees, Philip McElhone and Lewis Turner. But in the physical arrangements of the Library's holdings he took satisfaction, privately as well as publicly.

One problem, however, Young did not obscure.

His commentary in the annual reports on appointments may lack the frantic eloquence of his diaries and correspondence on the subject, but it is candid and to the point. The Library was authorized to increase its staff from 42 to 108 on July 1, 1897. Until completion of the move, Young delayed many appointments though he made the key staff appointments as soon as possible. Young's problems with appointments were dual: the number of applicants and the advocacy of Senators and Representatives for particular candidates. Eventually, the whole question became so oppressive that Young lost all sense of proportion. In his diary for September 2, 1898, he wrote: "I cannot make the Library an almshouse. I cannot appoint incompetent people. I cannot put a thousand pegs in a hundred holes. It is all a miserable, teasing, harrowing business, and 'wears out the soul.'" Three weeks later he thought there "never was a more perplexing problem."<sup>85</sup>

Although such comments reveal more about Young than the Library, the new Librarian was under great pressure, from both applicants and their congressional sponsors. On the average, there were more than 40 applications for every vacancy. Giving due consideration to such numbers was the first problem. Most of the applicants, moreover, seemed to have at least one congressional advocate. Young consequently became involved in an endless round of correspondence, fending off importunate job-hunters and keeping their sponsors at bay. The following letter, to Senator John M. Thurston, November 1, 1897, is typical:

I deeply regret that any action of mine should give you cause for "just criticism." The problem with which I have been struggling has been that of putting five thousand pegs into a hundred holes. I have considered, primarily, fitness for library work. This I had to do, or the Library might as well close. . . .

You say, further, that you are "justified in believing that most of the appointments in the Library are secured through considerations of favoritism, with an utter disregard of the just claims of Republican Senators from certain of the Western States." As this is rather a criticism than a statement of fact, it is difficult to answer it. So far as "favoritism" is concerned, I have broken life-long friendships because I did not appoint favorites. I had no one to serve when I became the Librarian. Never sought the office, resigned larger emoluments to accept it. I have as much personal interest in the appointments as I would have in a game of chess. . . .<sup>86</sup>

On January 6, 1898, Young called upon President McKinley and urged him to put the Library

under civil service. The President said "he would do it, as soon as I was ready." Young's congressional advisers, however, were opposed. On February 4 he discussed the subject with Senator Eugene Hale, who "had some doubts as to the Civil service, so far as the Library is concerned. Thought one department should be free." Ten days later Young saw the President again, who indicated his willingness to bring the Library employees into civil service within 30 days, but on the same day Representative Henry H. Bingham told Young that "the law did not permit" the President to enact civil service in the Library. Young's diary fell silent on the subject for several months, and his annual reports do not mention it. However, on December 23, 1898, his diary records that he "sent message to Mr. McKinley in regard to civil service reform." Young died barely three weeks later. At the confirmation hearings of his successor, Herbert Putnam was asked if he favored civil service for Library employees. Putnam equivocated, but generally opposed it for the Library of Congress. The 1901 annual report, Putnam's first extensive report, states succinctly (p. 203): "The appointments are not subject to the provisions of the civil-service law, which applies only to the Executive Departments of the Government." So much for civil service.

The appropriations act for fiscal 1898, which was the instrument for establishing the organization of the "new" Library, contained the following clause: "Provided, That all persons employed in and about said Library of Congress under the Librarian . . . shall be appointed solely with reference to their fitness for their particular duties."<sup>87</sup> To verify "fitness," Young appointed a three-man board (the Chief Assistant Librarian, the register of copyrights, and the superintendent of the reading room) to examine applicants for Library positions. The candidates included many Library employees on probationary appointment. The examination took place April 20, 1898, and consisted of about a dozen questions on each of the departments. The appendix to the 1898 *Report* includes the questions, which ranged from the technical ("What is meant by the word 'entry,' as used in cataloguing?") to the historical ("Who was Peter Force?"). The examining board was Young's chief reliance in answering congressional criticism, whether by individuals or that contained in a

Senate resolution of December 17, 1897. In his 1898 *Report*, partially in reply to that resolution, Young stated flatly: "There have been no removals and no appointments for political reasons."<sup>88</sup> Young, of course, had been a lifelong Republican partisan, and the *Library Journal* had criticized his own appointment as an example of political preferment, which in part it was. Nevertheless, his sturdy sense of integrity and his resistance to patronage requests preserved, at a crucial time for the Library, the spirit of civil service even though the letter had been denied him.

For key positions Young appointed Spofford as his Chief Assistant Librarian; Thorvald Solberg as register of copyrights, a position he was to occupy for more than 30 years; J. C. M. Hanson, who was in charge of the Catalogue Department for 13 years before concluding his career at the University of Chicago; and, as first chief of the Department of Manuscripts, Herbert Friedenwald, who was to win fame for his activity in the American Jewish Historical Society and editor of the *American Jewish Yearbook*. Young also advanced staff members within the Library, such as the cartographer, P. Lee Phillips, and Spofford's chief assistant, David Hutcheson, who was made superintendent of the reading room. Young brought A. P. C. Griffin, formerly of the Boston Public Library, and Arthur R. Kimball, state librarian of New Hampshire, to the staff later. His intention in his principal appointments was to have all sections of the country represented, befitting the national character of the Library. Hence Thomas H. Clark, former speaker of the Alabama legislature, was named law librarian.<sup>89</sup> Hanson, from Wisconsin, was named after another midwesterner, Alexander J. Rudolph, had declined to be considered. As David Mearns put it in *The Story Up to Now*, "It was a good team. It was a good start."<sup>90</sup> The *Library Journal*, which had initially (July 1897) deplored Young's appointment as "a matter of regret and disappointment," grudgingly admitted two months later: "Nothing can do more to justify the selection of Mr. Young than the admirable appointments he has made for the leading positions."<sup>91</sup>

Young also sought a balanced staff in what would now be called the hiring of minorities. Approximately 10 percent of the staff were black employees, more than half of whom Young ap-

pointed. As Librarian's messenger he appointed Louis Alexander, who had been employed in his own Philadelphia household. Another interesting appointment was that of Paul Laurence Dunbar, whom Young identified in a note to Senator George F. Hoar as "the well-known young colored poet."<sup>92</sup> Young seems to have taken a special interest in Dunbar, who had been recommended to him by Robert Ingersoll, "for long, long years" one of Young's "most honored and valued friends."<sup>93</sup> When Dunbar fell ill in late 1898, Young gave him the maximum leave allowed by law (60 days) and assured him that his position was secure and would be awaiting his return January 1. However, on January 1 Young was on his deathbed and Dunbar did not resume his position.

As a result of his appointments, about one-quarter of the staff during Young's tenure were women. This proportion was the result of his conscious effort to employ women in substantial numbers. Young later came to regret the action because the work was too strenuous, he thought, especially during the transition period. He made the appointment of women the subject of a paragraph in the 1897 *Report*, expressing the hope that "in a year or two" there would be more "gentle and useful offices suitable for women." In private, Young was by turns oppressed and philosophical over the problem. To J. W. Babcock, he wrote, October 18, 1897: "The lady applicants have given me a great deal of anxiety. So many hundreds who have every accomplishment but aptitude for library work—so much sorrow—such sore distress—a hundred sad tales a day." The next day, however, he wrote to Senator George P. Wetmore: "There is a universal impression that the Library is a Garden of Eden, especially designed for ladies. I am the angel with the flaming sword barring the entrance. On the contrary, the work is severe—must be for a year or so, until we are reorganized."<sup>94</sup>

Reorganization was a major concern of the new Librarian. To the President's secretary, John Addison Porter, Young wrote on September 14, 1897: "There is chaos in the Library and each department has had to be reorganized from the ground up." Until shortly before Young's appointment, the Library was organized into two departments: general and law. Appropriations for the increase of the general department were under the direction

of a joint committee of three Senators and three Representatives; those for law, under the direction of the Chief Justice. The President "solely" had authority to "appoint from time to time a Librarian to take charge of the Library of Congress." A concurrent resolution of the Senate May 5, 1896, called upon the Joint Committee to investigate "the condition of the Library of Congress, and to report upon the same at the next session of Congress, with such recommendations as may be deemed advisable; also to report a plan for the organization, custody, and management of the new Library building and the Library of Congress." The Joint Committee took testimony from a number of witnesses (including Melvil Dewey and Herbert Putnam), to the extent of 279 printed pages.<sup>95</sup>

Before the Joint Committee could make its recommendations, however, the full House acted on appropriations for fiscal 1898 and, in doing so, preempted the field by establishing the organization of the new Library and specifying its officers and staff. The law as amended and signed by President Cleveland February 19, 1897, provided for a catalog department, a copyright department, a manuscript department, a music department, a periodical department, and the following administrative units, which were the equivalent of departments: reading room, art gallery, hall of maps and charts, congressional reference library at the Capitol, and law library. These departments were to have "superintendents," except that the principal officers of the reading room, catalog department, and copyright department were designated assistant librarian, chief, and register of copyrights, respectively. There was also to be a Chief Assistant Librarian. The act also established the position of superintendent of the Library building and grounds, coequal with the Librarian in compensation and alike subject to Presidential appointment and Senatorial confirmation.<sup>96</sup>

That was the organizational scheme which, along with some subsidiary units, Young inherited as Librarian of Congress. During his tenure he effected some administrative changes (creation of an order department and a mail and supply department and establishment of a pavilion for the blind) and proposed others (a circulating department, a restoration and binding department, a juvenile department). Young was initially opposed



to a circulating department but apparently acceded to Spofford in requesting it. Before its establishment, however, creation of a public library for the District of Columbia made it unnecessary. Despite the proliferation of departments, which was probably unavoidable in the shake-down period of Young's tenure, the Librarian himself was of quite another mind. He would have preferred fewer departments, "condensation," as he phrased it.<sup>97</sup> In his diary for August 11, 1898, Young wrote: "The main trouble with these departments is that each wishes to become a small kingdom in itself & rule independent. The bill should be changed so as to reduce them all into three important departments—Copyright, Catalogue [, and] Administration."

No phase of the Library concerned Young more than development of the collections. On June 12, 1898, he confided to his diary: "I am trying to build the library far into the future, to make it a true library of research." To accomplish this end, he sought increased appropriations, private gifts, and exchanges, all within the context of firm bibliographical control of the collections.

Young sought significantly increased appropriations for development of the collections ("The only interests in the Liby which concern me are what pertains to its development.")<sup>98</sup> On January 14, 1898, however, a few days before the House Appropriations Committee hearings, he learned that there would not be "much effort to give the Liby money, that it will be rather on Spofford's lines." Senator William B. Allison "said that next year there would be more chance of doing something in the way of buying new books." The funds for books (general) for fiscal 1898 had been a mere \$4,000, of which Young managed to spend all but 71 cents. For the following year he asked for \$30,000 plus \$5,000 additionally for manuscript purchases, of which he was granted only \$15,000, with nothing specifically for manuscripts. To one as keenly aware of the Library's needs as Young was, the result was disappointing. In his 1898 *Report* (p. 6), he wrote: "While the Librarian is grateful for the recent increased appropriation of \$15,000, it would be wise to increase this so as to broaden the Library in every phase of progress." The Library, he reminded the Congress, is "an asset, not an expense."

Senator George Hoar of Massachusetts was, in

Young's words, "one of the best friends of the Library," one who believed that the Library should have a fund of \$200,000 "from which to draw in the way of getting at books."<sup>99</sup> The two men worked closely on the most notable private gift during Young's tenure, the art collection and library of Gardiner Greene Hubbard, along with the promise of a bequest of \$20,000 for the increase of the collection following Mrs. Hubbard's death. Young was attentive in negotiating for the Hubbard collection and made several trips to "Twin Oaks," the spacious Hubbard estate, later to be the Washington home of the Hubbards' daughter and son-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Alexander Graham Bell, and still later the Chinese embassy. The negotiation was delicate because Mrs. Hubbard wanted the collection housed in a designated room in the Library to be thereafter called "The Gardiner Greene Hubbard Library." She so stipulated in her letter offering the collection March 21, 1898. Although Young acquiesced in this phase of the request in his transmittal letter of March 30 to the Joint Committee, privately he thought that it "would have been better to have given the works & left the arrangement to the Librarian."<sup>100</sup> The Senate also objected to calling parts of public buildings after the names of individual citizens. It was Senator Hoar who secured the compromise by means of which the collection, but not part of the Library of Congress, was to bear Mr. Hubbard's name. The revised resolution of acceptance passed the Senate June 27, 1898, and the House July 7.<sup>101</sup>

Young's extensive international travel and his contacts in the diplomatic service led to the preparation of a circular letter to diplomatic and consular representatives of the United States in behalf of the Library. Prepared and distributed by Young in consultation with Secretary of State William R. Day, the letter was dispatched February 16, 1898. An appendix (p. 83-87) to the 1898 *Report* lists the first fruits of that effort, nearly 300 volumes and pamphlets from 20 embassies and consulates. "Under a reciprocal and considerate policy," Young wrote in the 1898 *Report* (p. 6), "the Library by the mere processes of administration could be largely increased in value." Young also sent the curator of manuscripts, Dr. Friedenwald, to Cuba in early January 1899 to locate and acquire library materials. After Young's death on



January 17, Spofford summarily recalled Friedenwald to Washington. Despite the abbreviated venture, Friedenwald secured 126 manuscripts and some 300 books and pamphlets for the collections. The favor with which the Chinese regarded Young as a result of his travels with Grant, his ministry in the 1880's, and, above all, his friendship with Li Hung Chang is evident in the arrangement Young made with the Chinese ambassador, Wu Ting-fang, for employees of the embassy to catalog Chinese books in the Library, largely acquired through purchase of the library of Caleb Cushing. One of the most widely traveled men of his generation, Young showed that he was keenly aware of the need to internationalize the Library's collections, to supplement the Americana derived from gifts and copyright deposits.

Among the hidden evidences of Young's contributions to internationalize the Library of Congress is the series of gifts by William W. Rockhill of Orientalia, chiefly, Chinese books. The Librarian's annual reports for 1901 and 1902 record the extent to which the Library was indebted to Rockhill, assistant secretary of state, for the growth of its Chinese collections. What such reports do not record was that Rockhill was one of Young's "boys" in the State Department, having served as secretary of the legation when Young was minister to China. Young and Rockhill were frequent correspondents from the mid-1880's to the late 1890's, and Young's letters to Rockhill in Harvard's Houghton Library document a close and personal friendship, which undoubtedly laid the basis for Rockhill's benefactions so soon after Young's death and in a field of particular interest to both men.

In his 1898 *Report* Young sought to sensitize the Congress and the citizens to the national role of the Library. "If the American felt the same interest in his national library as the Englishman in the British Museum, in a few years we should have one of the three great libraries of the world. The fact that we depend almost alone upon the accretions of the Copyright Department and the modest appropriations of Congress narrows our scope and limits our usefulness."<sup>102</sup> In his diary, Young recorded his discouragement. Shortly after completing the 1898 *Report*, he wrote (December 5, 1898): "The Library will grow as a slow development, and be governed by the appreciation

of the people & the good will of the Congress. I depend more upon the copyright, the exchanges than private support, & yet I know of no monument that could do more good & assure a more enduring fame than such a gift as Mr. Rockefeller could make. Such an impetus would sweep it ahead." If Young had lived, appeals for massive private support may have been his tack.

John Russell Young was an innovative Librarian of Congress. His best known innovation was development of a "pavilion" for the blind, in which he had gathered the Library's holdings "in pointed and raised letters" and an assistant put in charge. Young also initiated a series of readings for the blind, beginning November 8, 1897, one week after the opening of the new Library. Young anticipated only one or two readings a week, but during the first year there were daily readings, Sundays excepted, and approximately 10,000 visitors to the pavilion, which was located in the northwest pavilion, present site of Music Division and Personnel Operations offices.<sup>103</sup> The Librarian in his first *Report* (1897) also called for transfer of historical manuscripts from other government departments to the Library of Congress, especially the historical archive in the Department of State, which contained personal papers of early Presidents and other officials, purchased by the government throughout the 19th century.<sup>104</sup> Six years later, by Act of Congress and Executive Order, the transfer was accomplished. Young also began the reassembly of the library of Thomas Jefferson, the contents of which had been intermingled throughout the Library's collections and, in Young's words, "entombed and forgotten." In order to "perfect the tribute it is proposed to pay to an immortal name," Young began the task of locating books and forming a special collection. He included a history of the Jefferson library as an appendix to the 1898 *Report*.<sup>105</sup> The culmination of Young's initiatives appears in one of the Library's noblest bibliographical monuments, *Catalogue of the Library of Thomas Jefferson*, a five-volume catalog edited by E. Millicent Sowerby and published 1952-59. In a preface to the first volume, Librarian of Congress Luther H. Evans remarks that efforts to reassemble the library began "at the turn of the century." Young's name is not mentioned. The beginnings of a uniform classification system and the opening of a public card catalog, both in

1898, were other initiatives which his successors developed.

William Dawson Johnston, who wrote the definitive account of the early years of the Library of Congress, left notes and preliminary chapters toward a second volume on the Library's history. In that unpublished manuscript is an authoritative survey of John Russell Young as Librarian of Congress:

Mr. Young entered the Library profession without technical training; but with what is better, a broad cultivated mind with an intelligent discernment of the mission of the Library and a capacity of adapting means to ends. His methods were simple and direct, guided by a mind abhorrent of complicated and circumrotary processes. In this he was in unconscious sympathy with the methods of that peerless Librarian the lamented [Justin] Winsor. Under Mr. Young's guidance the Library was fast becoming a living force and rapidly gaining in public appreciation. The inert books were transformed into active agents of usefulness; scholars, students, and the humblest inquirers were encouraged by him and the policy of the widest use of the books consistent with safety was enjoined upon his subordinates.<sup>108</sup>

Young died January 17, 1899, after a three-week illness, the only Librarian of Congress to die in office. His funeral services were held Saturday, January 21, at St. John's Church in Lafayette Square. The Chinese embassy staff attended the funeral en masse, a mark of distinction said to have been rarely conferred before, if ever. The Library of Congress was closed for the day. A special train from Philadelphia brought a large group from the Union League, where Young's presidential portrait was draped and the flag in front of the League house remained at half-staff. Tributes to Young's leadership and laments over the untimeliness of his death vied for space in the Washington, Philadelphia, and New York newspapers. One tribute, however, stands out from the rest.

I have known him since [1865]. I served with him on the New York Tribune, when he was managing editor and I was city editor and night editor. I think he was one of the most brilliant newspaper writers the country ever produced. Horace Greeley regarded him as a marvel, and was very fond of him. James Gordon Bennett was also much attached to him, and for many years Mr. Young had great influence with Mr. Bennett.

Mr. Young was doing magnificent work in the Library. No man could appreciate that fact more than myself, and I bear cheerful witness to it. If any author went to the Library to make some researches, he was given a room, writing material, messengers to wait on him, and he

could keep that room as long as he wanted. That just shows one of the little details of his management, all tending to make the Library the grand institution which it has become. I regard it as a great misfortune to the country that he should die before he could carry out all the plans he had for the Library. Socially he was genial, companionable, bright and witty. He was prophetic in political matters, thoroughly acquainted with the politics of the country, and knew every great politician intimately.<sup>107</sup>

The author of those sentiments was Amos Jay Cummings, political editor on the *Tribune* under Young, author of the graphic but irreverent *Packard's Monthly* article about Young's managing editorship, a casualty of Young's discipline, later managing editor of the *Sun* and implacable journalistic nemesis of Young for more than a decade. By a twist of fate too curious for fiction, Cummings had entered politics, been elected to Congress, and served as Representative from New York during Young's tenure as Librarian and as a member of the Joint Committee on the Library. It is somehow symptomatic of Young's career that his early death permitted his old adversary to wax noble about Young's life and work.

The accomplishments of John Russell Young in his brief tenure as Librarian of Congress were far from negligible. Moreover, they were coincident with an active schedule of journalistic writing for the *New York Herald* and other outlets.<sup>109</sup> Seen in this light, they were remarkable. It is only when we consider the state of Young's health during his Librarianship that his achievements verge on the incredible. How the man did what he did, feeling as he did, almost defies belief.

Notwithstanding his vast reading, his voluminous writing, and his far-flung travels, Young was not robust. Even as a young man he was troubled with insomnia, headaches, fatigue, rheumatism, neuralgia, and sundry ailments, including urological problems. Young was also subject to depression. The death of his two-year-old son "Johnny" in 1867 oppressed him for years. The death of his sister Mary on February 8, 1898, afflicted Young's own final year of life. The course his life took was not calculated to check a natural tendency toward self-pity, and his depression and hypochondria were self-fulfilling and mutually supporting. On November 14, 1890, four days before his third marriage, he was "taken suddenly & violently ill, with fever, pain, & congestive chill." He went ahead with the marriage November 18, but was

"very ill & retired after the ceremony." This is merely one of many instances in which his physical and emotional states were apparently intermingled.

Young's first weeks as Librarian came during a period of good health. On August 20, 1897, indeed, he wrote a friend that he had "not been ill for a moment" since arriving in Washington the preceding January. One ominous occurrence, however, was a severe fall from a trolley car in early November, ominous in that Young had a history of such falls. By December, he was complaining of various ailments, especially pain in his feet.

The record of his physical and emotional ills became a litany in 1898. He consulted several doctors, went on a milk diet, took various unspecified medicines, and eventually underwent electric shock treatments—all to no avail. He feared mental collapse and thought he detected its early signs, such as forgetfulness, strange dreams, and visions. A week at Atlantic City in mid-June had not improved his condition, and in mid-July his doctor ordered him to leave for the country "at once." He made the train trip to Buena Vista, Pa., his servant Louis Alexander "fanning me all the way up."<sup>109</sup> There was some improvement, but in mid-August, shortly before he was to return to Washington, Young suffered another attack, the "suddenness & severity" of which alarmed him, as did "the same hallucinations & depression of spirits."<sup>110</sup> The return to Washington on August 15 was even worse than the trip to Buena Vista. Young "trembled so could hardly get on the train," and, after an unfortunate delay because of a missed connection in Baltimore, "trembled from nerves head to feet as I climbed the stairs at home & tumbled into bed."<sup>111</sup> Dr. Friedenwald of the Manuscript Department had accompanied Young on the return trip, and soon, A. R. Spofford reported, the Library was full of rumors about Young's condition. There was speculation within Young's family as well, leading him to "morbid moods" against which he tried to fortify himself. "Have been thinking of [Roscoe] Conkling & his end, & note some of the symptoms that attended his end. But it may be a fancy. Am ready."<sup>112</sup> Despite family concern, Young found little peace and quiet at home, which he characterized as "the domestic circus, musical & otherwise."<sup>113</sup>

The next attack ("the severest I have ever had") occurred in early October and lasted a week. In late November he complained of a "constant pain in my side." Early in December he fell again, this time on the Library's marble steps, injuring his knee. The stomach pains returned shortly before Christmas and led to further uneasiness. "I leave such things to nature as I never had a satisfactory talk with any doctor," he wrote on December 21. By Christmas Eve, however, Young was in better spirits and "feeling very well." The year, he thought, was closing "pleasantly." He left the Library earlier than usual that afternoon in order to help Mrs. Young with the Christmas tree, "but as I was going into the house, when I slipped and fell & received a severe stunning smashing blow on the face." The diary entry ends incoherently. The final entry in his diary occurred December 27, 1898: "*Token govt. Very ill.*" Three weeks later he was dead.

It is obviously mistaken to contend (as some standard authorities do) that Young's death occurred from complications following the Christmas Eve fall. The fall was merely a final evidence of increasing debility, physical and mental, during his year and a half as Librarian. Perhaps all his symptoms related to Bright's disease, of which he had evidenced some signs in his twenties and to which the attending physician ascribed his death. In any case, John Russell Young while Librarian of Congress was a very sick man.

*Men and Memories: Personal Reminiscences* (New York and London, 1901) was posthumously compiled by Young's widow, largely from his published newspaper and magazine articles, with some letters to and from Young included. Poorly done, it is full of elementary errors in names, dates, etc. In substance, however, it is meaty. In a foreword, Alexander McClure expressed the belief that Young's "intimate acquaintance with eminent men exceeded that of any other one man in the entire century" (p. ix). Few readers of *Men and Memories* will be disposed to doubt it. Young's career offered him splendid opportunities for friendship with the celebrated men of his time, literally all over the world, and he did not neglect them. Here are first-hand accounts, based on intimate acquaintance, of Charles Dickens, Horace Greeley, Walt Whitman, Edwin Forrest, James Gordon Bennett, Roscoe Conkling, Li Hung Chang, Henry

George, U. S. Grant, of course, and many, many other 19th-century notables.

Even as a truncated and substitute memoir, however, it has one glaring deficiency. Although it traces many of Young's movements and records some of his associations, it reveals little of Young himself. Young was self-effacing, by nature and by profession. Whether his vantage point was a ridge overlooking the Battle of Bull Run, a place "at the side of Lincoln" as he delivered the Gettysburg Address ("in a high key, voice archaic, strident, almost in a shriek," according to Young),<sup>14</sup> on a hotel balcony on the Rue de la Paix when the Paris crowd toppled the Vendôme Column, in the company of Grant and Bismarck as they discussed the professions of arms and government, or in the American legation in Peking, Young was an observer par excellence. He wrote abundantly and well; he left a series of diaries and preserved much of his voluminous private correspondence; he seems to have left a strong impression on many notable men; but Young himself remains elusive.

The Librarianship of Congress, therefore, was as important to Young as he was to the Library. He did not seek the position and, at first, even declined it. He would have preferred to be made minister to Spain "and taken a more active part in public affairs" than his "tranquil position" as Librarian permitted. His annual salary of \$5,000 represented a financial sacrifice, he thought. Nevertheless, he accepted the position and fulfilled its responsibilities with insufficient regard for his own health and well-being. What Young would in time have made of the Librarianship is speculation at best. His accomplishments in 18 months

were significant, but his principal service was to confer upon the Library his own prestige and some of his best characteristics. Although his appointment was criticized as "political," Young sought scrupulously to make the Library apolitical. Thenceforward, it was reasonable to expect a singular person, not a functionary, to fill the position and to grant the Library a freedom to pursue its mission free of political pressure.

The most regrettable aspect to Young's brief incumbency, however, is that, despite his achievements, he was able to make merely a start. It was a good start, to be sure, but the observer of his career would require more to bring Young from the periphery and background to the forefront, where his contemporaries were convinced he belonged.

In another sense, however, the imagination does not rebel at Young's early death and the brevity of his Librarianship. He was a man of the 19th century. Barely into his twenties, he was thrown into contact with the politically and journalistically powerful. The Civil War and Reconstruction were his milieu, and his heroes were the prominent men of that era. As each one fell in the 1880's and 1890's, Young's habit was editorially to memorialize them and to refresh the tints on fading mental pictures of the past. Although he recognized current problems and devised effective lines of action to solve them, his mind dwelt upon the great political issues of the past and his imagination upon the heroic struggles which bred them.

For a new century, a new Librarian of Congress, a younger and healthier Librarian of Congress, would not be amiss.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> In Young's lifetime and shortly thereafter, he was represented as having been born in Downingtown, Pa., in 1841, rather than Ireland in 1840. Since one of the sources giving such information was the *Memorial History of Philadelphia*, which Young edited, and a memorial sketch appended to the *Report of the Librarian of Congress*, 1899, one suspects Young's complicity in the mistake. The correct information appears in John Russell Young, *Men and Memories: Personal Reminiscences*, ed. May D. Russell Young, 2 vols. (New York and London: F. Tennyson Neely, © 1901), 1: xiii, and in the sketch of Young in the *Dictionary of American Biography*. Among

Young's many animadversions against the Irish, see his article "The Election for the Presidency," *Macmillan's Magazine* 35 (January 1877): 244-55.

<sup>2</sup> John Russell Young, *Diary*, March 6, 1870, John Russell Young Papers, Library of Congress. Subsequent quotations from Young's diaries, if sufficiently identified through references in the text, will not necessarily receive a footnote citation. All diary quotations are from originals in the Young Papers unless otherwise identified.

<sup>3</sup> In his diary for January 10, 1898, on the occasion of his son Gordon's first day at school, Young reminisced: "How well I remember my own first visit,—to school,—



the day snowy, father carrying me on his back, school on Marlborough street. Miss Wilson the teacher,—my small bible in simple words.—not six, but admitted under age because I could read. . . ." In a letter to T. V. Cooper, July 15, 1898, Young characterized himself at age 21 as "full of books and bookishness." Librarians' Letterbooks, Library of Congress.

<sup>4</sup> Young to Mary Young Blakeley, April 18, 1880. Copy in manuscript biography of Young, pp. 2–4, Young Papers.

<sup>5</sup> M. H. to Young, December 12, 1854, Young Papers. The writer is identified by annotations on her letters as "Madame Hagenbach," the designation used by the unknown author of the unpublished manuscript biography in the Young Papers (probably May D. Young). All the letters are signed "M. H.," "M. H. B.," or "M. Hagenbach." Most of the letters are datelined "Opelousas," about 100 miles from New Orleans.

<sup>6</sup> Greeley to Young, May 13, 1856, Young Papers.

<sup>7</sup> Young, "Men Who Reigned: Bennett, Greeley, Raymond, Prentice, Forney," *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine* 51 (February 1893): 196.

<sup>8</sup> Diary entry quoted in the manuscript biography, p. 53, Young Papers. Young's original diary for 1859 is not in the Young Papers.

<sup>9</sup> *Philadelphia Press*, July 23, 1861, p. 2.

<sup>10</sup> See "The War in the Southwest," *Philadelphia Press*, April 12, 1864, p. 1, and "The Campaign in Louisiana," *ibid.*, April 25, 1864, p. 1.

<sup>11</sup> See his letters to *North American Review* editor Charles Eliot Norton in the Houghton Library, Harvard University.

<sup>12</sup> Young to Hay, August 25, 1866, John Hay Papers, John Hay Library, Brown University.

<sup>13</sup> Wilkeson to Young, January 21, 1867, Young Papers.

<sup>14</sup> Chase to Young, letterpress copy, June 28, 1867, Salmon P. Chase Papers, LC.

<sup>15</sup> Greeley to Young, June 20, 1867, Young Papers.

<sup>16</sup> Greeley to Young, July 23, 1867, Young Papers.

<sup>17</sup> Greeley to Young, August 12, 1867, Young Papers.

<sup>18</sup> Greeley to Young, September 4, 1867, Young Papers.

<sup>19</sup> Greeley to Young, September 22, 1867, Young Papers.

<sup>20</sup> Greeley to Young, November 20, 1867, Young Papers.

<sup>21</sup> Diary, July 7, 1898, Young Papers. The comment on Colfax below is also of this date.

<sup>22</sup> Phillips to Young, August 24, 1867, Young Papers.

<sup>23</sup> Phillips to Young [January?] 1868, Young Papers.

<sup>24</sup> Colfax to Young, September 4, 1867, Young Papers.

<sup>25</sup> Sickles to Young, November 18, 1867, Young Papers.

<sup>26</sup> *New York Tribune*, January 2, 1868, p. 4. Diary, January 2, 1868, Young Papers.

<sup>27</sup> The others were "The Forbearance of Congress" and "Moral Causes for Impeachment." He followed these

with "The Impeachment of the President" and two other impeachment editorials, February 25, and "Impeachment Is Peace," February 26—seven editorials on the subject in three days, at least five of them of Young's authorship, along with numerous news dispatches, etc.

<sup>28</sup> Diary, February 24, 1868, Young Papers. Young later described the results and Greeley's reaction thus: "The *Tribune* leaped and bounded. The circulation swept onwards. There was joy in the exchequer. Greeley returned in grief from the Minnesota woods. He did not believe in impeachment. 'Why hang a man who was bent on hanging himself?' " Greeley also objected to introducing "these crazy, reprehensible French methods into a composed American legislature." Young, "Men Who Reigned," p. 190.

<sup>29</sup> Colfax to Young, February 25, 1868, Young Papers.

<sup>30</sup> *New York Tribune*, May 9, 1868, p. 4.

<sup>31</sup> Stanton to Young, May 10, 1868, Young Papers. It is at least curious that Colfax, Phillips, and Stanton should all adopt the "white plume" to signify Young's moral leadership. It is an allusion, conscious or otherwise, to Thomas B. Macaulay's historical poem, "Ivry," about King Henry of Navarre.

<sup>32</sup> Young's editorials may, in fact, have been counterproductive. That at least was the view of J. W. Schuckers, private secretary to Chief Justice Salmon P. Chase and a frequent correspondent of Young's. See the fragmentary manuscript by Schuckers, which begins: "It is my entirely fixed opinion—I may say that it is almost within my certain knowledge,—that if it had not been for the terrific infamous onslaughts made upon one of the doubtful Senators by Republicans high and low, everywhere in the country, by letters, telegrams, individual visitors, deputations and by newspaper attacks,—particularly by Mr. Greeley in *The Tribune*,—that that Senator would have voted otherwise than he did vote." J. W. Schuckers Papers, LC.

<sup>33</sup> Young to Badeau, July 17, 1868, Adam Badeau Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

<sup>34</sup> See the account in *Men and Memories*, 1:120–48. The *Tribune* devoted its entire front page and part of page 2, April 20, 1868, to the Dickens dinner. Dickens' manager, George Dolby, called the dinner "one of the most brilliant of its kind ever held in the Empire City" in *Charles Dickens As I Knew Him: The Story of the Reading Tours in Great Britain and America (1866–1870)* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1885), p. 303. Another account of the dinner appears in Kate D. Sweetser, "Dining with Dickens at Delmonico's . . .," *Bookman* 49 (March 1919): 20–28.

<sup>35</sup> "How Newspapers Are Made. The New York *Tribune*," *Packard's Monthly* 1 (October 1868): 87–89; (November 1868): 105–9.

<sup>36</sup> Did Young coin the word "Copperhead," as Cummings asserts? The origin of the usage is unsettled. Paul H. Smith, "First Use of the Term 'Copperhead,'" *Amer-*



*ican Historical Review* 32 (July 1927):799-800, attributed the usage to the *Cincinnati Gazette*, July 30, 1862. Joe Skidmore, "The Copperhead Press and the Civil War," *Journalism Quarterly* 16 (December 1939):345, attributed the usage to the *Detroit Free Press* in 1861, an attribution accepted by Frank L. Mott, *American Journalism . . .* (New York: Macmillan, 1941), p. 355. If Young deserves credit for the coinage, it should be looked for in the columns of Forney's *Philadelphia Press* in early 1861.

<sup>37</sup> Cummings, "How Newspapers Are Made," p. 109.

<sup>38</sup> Young to Reid, January 17, 1869, Reid Family Papers, LC.

<sup>39</sup> Young to Reid [February 13, 1869], Reid Family Papers.

<sup>40</sup> Young to Reid [February 19, 1869], Reid Family Papers.

<sup>41</sup> Young's magnanimity was put to the test in early 1889 when he was establishing the London edition of the *New York Herald*. The publisher, James Gordon Bennett, instructed him to give editorial support to the anticipated nomination of Reid as ambassador to Great Britain. In his diary (March 2, 1889) Young remarked that he would do so "as well as I can. Reid's coming here would mean the most implacable enemy of the *Herald* & myself. I have always been on civil terms with Reid although in the early sixties we were intimate. He chose to dissolve the intimacy by allowing his ambition to lead him into an act of perfidy & there has been no time since when he could do me an injury when he has missed the opportunity." Reid was named minister to France instead by President Harrison. In the early 20th century he served as ambassador to Great Britain.

<sup>42</sup> The *Sun* attacks appeared on the following dates: April 27, p. 2; April 28, pp. 1-2; April 29, p. 2; May 1, p. 1; May 2, p. 2; May 7, p. 2; May 8, p. 2; May 10, p. 2; May 12, p. 2; May 16, p. 2; May 17, p. 2; May 18, p. 2; May 19, p. 2; May 20, p. 2 (two items); May 21, p. 2.

<sup>43</sup> Greeley defended Young in the *Tribune*, May 1, 1869, p. 6, but agreed that the Associated Press matter deserved investigation. Meanwhile, Young made some attempt to discredit the *Sun* charges. See, for example, his letter to Adam Badeau, May 3, 1869, Badeau Papers, Harvard University, in which he asked Badeau, President Grant's secretary, for a letter from Grant, to be privately shown to Greeley, exonerating Young of the charge of having sought an office from Grant.

<sup>44</sup> Candace Stone, *Dana and the Sun* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1938), pp. 125-26.

<sup>45</sup> Young was popularly thought to be discredited by the *Sun* attacks. See Frederic Hudson, *Journalism in the United States* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1873), pp. 560, 682-84, for a near-contemporary account. Hudson (p. 560) attributed Young's downfall to the journalistic

"mania" to double and treble oneself—a mania which Young was said to have shared with Forney, James Gordon Bennett, and others.

<sup>46</sup> Late that year he wrote Secretary of State Hamilton Fish that he would like to live in Washington, his wife's birthplace, but not at the cost of seeking an office from the President. "I shrink from the whole range of Washington offices,—with irresistible antipathy." Young to Fish, November 14, 1870, Hamilton Fish Papers, LC.

<sup>47</sup> Years later, Young would recall Grant as his "most dear & honored friend, whose memory grows in splendor as the years go on. No such friend as Grant." Diary, January 9, 1897, Young Papers.

<sup>48</sup> *New York Standard*, June 15, 1871, pp. 1, 4. Young's dispatch was reprinted in the *Philadelphia Star*. The *Standard* version is represented by the appropriate pages filed with the correspondence in the Young Papers.

<sup>49</sup> *New York Tribune*, July 17, 1877. Quoted in Joseph J. Mathews, *George W. Smalley* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1973), p. 85.

<sup>50</sup> *Around the World With General Grant: A Narrative of the Visit of General U. S. Grant, Ex-President of the United States, to various Countries in Europe, Asia, and Africa, in 1877, 1878, 1879. . . . 2 vols.* (New York: American News Co., © 1879). According to Ellis Paxson Oberholtzer, *A History of the United States Since the Civil War*, vol. 4 (New York: Macmillan, 1931), p. 58, Young's book was "one of the most widely circulated books in the history of the publishing trade in America."

<sup>51</sup> Young was not overwhelmed by the occasion. "The first serious dish was composed of crane, sea-weed, moss, rice bread and potatoes, which we picked over in a curious way, as though we were at an auction sale of remnants, anxious to rummage out a bargain." *Around the World*, 2:486.

<sup>52</sup> *Around the World*, 1:301-2.

<sup>53</sup> Diary, April 16, 1880, Young Papers.

<sup>54</sup> See the obituaries, January 5, 1881, in the *New York Times*, p. 5, and the *New York Herald*, p. 10.

<sup>55</sup> Grant to Garfield, February 18, 1881, James A. Garfield Papers, LC.

<sup>56</sup> Tyler Dennett, "American Choices in the Far East in 1882," *American Historical Review* 30 (October 1924):86.

<sup>57</sup> In regard to the appointment, Young had written to Adam Badeau, February 13, 1882: "I really do not care for it, and have only considered China or Japan in the light of a possible public duty. I expect, if I should be named, to be horribly abused, and perhaps assailed in the Senate by the enemies of the General as well as my own. But I shall not fly from the ordeal." Badeau Papers.

<sup>58</sup> *Harper's Weekly* 26 (March 25, 1882):187. The magazine also included (p. 188) a quarter-page portrait of Young, reproducing a photograph by I. W. Taber.

<sup>50</sup> Diary, October 22, 1883, Young Papers.

<sup>51</sup> Printed by Dennett, "American Choices," pp. 96-97. Many of Young's dispatches are printed in appropriate volumes of *Foreign Relations of the United States*: 1883, pp. 123-211; 1884, pp. 46-104; 1885, pp. 144-69.

<sup>52</sup> Dennett, "American Choices," pp. 84-85. See also Merle Curti and John Stalker, "'The Flowery Flag Devils'—The American Image in China, 1840-1900," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 96 (December 1952): 663-90.

<sup>53</sup> Young to Cleveland, March 29, 1885, Grover Cleveland Papers, LC.

<sup>54</sup> See clipping from unidentified London newspaper in Young's diary for February 3, 1889, which states that Young was "for many years the chief leader-writer on the *Herald* in New York, and was at one time the best-paid journalist in the world. . . if anybody can make such an experiment successful, he is the man."

<sup>55</sup> It has been estimated that the younger Bennett made and spent \$30 million from the *Herald* during his lifetime. Mott, *American Journalism*, p. 421.

<sup>56</sup> Horace Traubel, *With Walt Whitman in Camden*, vol. 4, ed. Sculley Bradley (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1953), p. 40.

<sup>57</sup> Young's reply, as recorded in his diary, June 17, 1898, had been: "I do not think I would accept if the town were thrown into the bargain." A day earlier he had written in his diary that "there was scarcely a duty in the office that would not be very distasteful to me."

<sup>58</sup> Diary, December 13, 1892, Young Papers. Henry Watterson, in a memorial tribute to Young in his *Louisville Courier-Journal*, called the League presidency "the highest social distinction which a citizen can attain to in our country." See reprint in the *Washington Post*, February 12, 1899, p. 21.

<sup>59</sup> *Chronicle of the Union League of Philadelphia 1862-1902* (Philadelphia: The Union League, 1902), p. 58.

<sup>60</sup> Young, *Men and Memories*, 1:46.

<sup>61</sup> The Union League of Philadelphia, *Proceedings*, 1892 (Philadelphia, 1893), pp. 8-9.

<sup>62</sup> *Proceedings*, 1893 (Philadelphia, 1894), p. 8.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>65</sup> Maxwell Whiteman, *Gentlemen in Crisis: The First Century of the Union League of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: The Union League, 1975), p. 157.

<sup>66</sup> This does not seem to have been a Union League function, but Young entertained General Longstreet and others at the Union League before departing for Gettysburg.

<sup>67</sup> *Memorial History of the City of Philadelphia . . .*, ed. John Russell Young, 2 vols. (New York: New-York History Co., 1895-98).

<sup>68</sup> James P. Boyd, *Life and Public Services of Hon. James G. Blaine . . .* (n.p., Publishers' Union, 1893).

<sup>69</sup> See note 68.

<sup>70</sup> Diary, May 4, 1897, Young Papers.

<sup>71</sup> Diary, January 27, 1898, Young Papers.

<sup>72</sup> *Report of the Librarian of Congress, 1897* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1897), p. 3.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 44-45.

<sup>74</sup> To P. Lee Phillips, the map librarian, Young wrote on December 22, 1897: "I know of no rules as to the government of the Library other than my own." Librarians' Letterbooks. Letters by Young as Librarian are from this source unless otherwise identified. If dated in text, they will receive no footnote citation.

<sup>75</sup> Helen-Anne Hilker, "Monument to Civilization: Diary of a Building," and John Y. Cole, "The Main Building of the Library of Congress: A Chronology, 1871-1965," *Quarterly Journal of the Library of Congress* 29 (October 1972): 234-70.

<sup>76</sup> Diary, September 28, 1898, Young Papers.

<sup>77</sup> Young to Thurston, letterpress copy, November 1, 1897, Librarians' Letterbooks.

<sup>78</sup> *Report*, 1901, p. 202. The "Constitution" of the Library is surveyed on pp. 198-208 of the 1901 *Report*, with many provisions of law excerpted.

<sup>79</sup> *Report*, 1898, p. 42. Young's letter in reply to the resolution was printed as Senate Document 42, 55th Cong., 2d sess. Young was also staunch in his support of Library employees and defended Thorvald Solberg several times in reply to congressional criticism.

<sup>80</sup> Young, influenced perhaps by reputed regional distinctions, wanted to "go South" for a law librarian, he wrote Chief Justice Melville Fuller, August 22, 1897, Librarians' Letterbooks.

<sup>81</sup> David C. Mearns, *The Story Up to Now* (Washington: Library of Congress, 1947), p. 153. Forms part of *Annual Report of the Librarian of Congress*, 1946.

<sup>82</sup> *Library Journal* 22 (August 1897): 379. References to Young in *LJ* over the next two years were progressively complimentary, although great credit was usually given to his "able assistants."

<sup>83</sup> Young to Hoar, December 20, 1897, Librarians' Letterbooks.

<sup>84</sup> Young to Dunbar, August 18, 1897, Librarians' Letterbooks.

<sup>85</sup> Young to Babcock, October 18; to Wetmore, October 19, 1897, Librarians' Letterbooks.

<sup>86</sup> *Report*, 1901, pp. 200-201. See also Mearns, *The Story*, pp. 138-42.

<sup>87</sup> *Report*, 1901, pp. 200-203. See also Mearns, *The Story*, pp. 142-47.

<sup>88</sup> Diary, January 18, 1898, Young Papers.

<sup>89</sup> Diary, January 14, 1898, Young Papers.

<sup>90</sup> Diary, February 23, 1898, Young Papers.

<sup>91</sup> Diary, April 7, 1898, Young Papers.

<sup>92</sup> See *Report*, 1898, p. 54.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 40-41.

<sup>104</sup> *Report*, 1897, p. 29.

<sup>105</sup> *Report*, 1898, pp. 63-66.

<sup>106</sup> Johnston, notes on history of Library of Congress: J. R. Young, pp. 5-6. William Dawson Johnston Papers, LC.

<sup>107</sup> *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, January 18, 1897. Clipping from Bernard R. Green Papers, LC.

<sup>108</sup> Young remarked in his diary for June 2, 1898, following receipt of a telegram from James Gordon Ben-

nett that *Figaro* had printed his letter, "So I am in the position of addressing the public opinion of Paris, New York, London & Washington on the same day."

<sup>109</sup> Diary, July 15, 1898, Young Papers.

<sup>110</sup> Diary, August 13, 1898, Young Papers.

<sup>111</sup> Diary, August 15, 1898, Young Papers.

<sup>112</sup> Diary, September 29, 1898, Young Papers.

<sup>113</sup> Diary, November 1, 1898, Young Papers.

<sup>114</sup> Young, *Men and Memories*, 1:70.





# Herbert Putnam

## *The Tallest Little Man in the World*

by Edward N. Waters

Herbert Putnam, more than any person I can think of, deserves a full-length biography. To write such a work would demand years of research, the reading of many books, and the examination of countless documents and letters. The brief bibliography appended to this "appreciation," indispensable as the works it cites are, can record only the highlights of his career. Each title is individually valuable, but I must single out two items that I call invaluable—those written by David Chambers Mearns, distinguished historian and librarian, who served on the staff of the Library of Congress for half a century. Any one searching for these under the author's name in a library catalog might not find them. *The Story up to Now* appeared as a substantial portion of the 1946 *Annual Report of the Librarian of Congress* (then Luther H. Evans). And it was a subsequent Librarian of Congress, L. Quincy Mumford, who disclosed Mr. Mearns' authorship of the lengthy essay *Herbert Putnam and His Responsible Eye* which constituted the major share of *Herbert Putnam, 1861-1939: A Memorial Tribute* (Washington, Library of Congress: 1956). To the latter Mr. Mearns appended a detailed chronology of the chief events and awards in Herbert Putnam's life. I am deeply grateful to all the authors mentioned, quoted, and

listed in the ensuing pages, but my deepest and most unrestrained gratitude must go to that eloquent and perceptive scholar David Chambers Mearns, my colleague and superior for some 35 years. He was forced to decline this privileged assignment—but you and I can imagine what he would have done with it.

\* \*

On April 5, 1899, a great event happened in the Library of Congress. On that day Herbert Putnam took office as Librarian. Short of stature and slight of build, at the age of 37 he was a young man for such a responsible post, and it may well be doubted that he anticipated 40 years of service in what became one of the greatest libraries, perhaps the greatest, in the world. Under his "responsible eye" (his own expression) it flourished and grew and extended its influence to every corner of America; its preeminence was acknowledged abroad; its resources permitted its collections to come alive. All

*Herbert Putnam, Librarian of Congress, 1899-1939.*  
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THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

this occurred under Herbert Putnam's aegis, and continues today. The Library of Congress of the present and future exists as a nearly anonymous monument to him.

What did the press think of the appointment? The *Evening Star* of April 5, 1899, after the usual eye-catching headlines, reported:

This morning Mr. Putnam appeared at the library and Acting Librarian Spofford escorted him to the commodious quarters set apart for the librarian. The oath of office was taken before a notary in the Capitol building, after which Mr. Putnam signed the oath and sent the document to the Secretary of State.

The remainder of the day was spent in becoming acquainted with the heads of departments in the library and the principal employees. Mr. Spofford introduced the new librarian to his subordinates and went with him through the building, pointing out the location of the departments, and giving him a bird's-eye view of the working branches.

Mr. Putnam is a young-looking man, when one considers the work he has done and the results he has accomplished. His most striking characteristic is reserve of manner, not reserve which suggests coldness or haughtiness, however, for, on the contrary, he is very genial. His personality is attractive and would impress one as a man who makes friends easily and without much effort upon his own part.

... Mr. Putnam is venturing cautiously upon his work, and, as might be expected, is not in a position at this time to talk very specifically about the library or his own intentions. When questioned upon his general policy respecting the library, he said:

*The Washington Evening Star on April 5, 1899, described Herbert Putnam's first day as Librarian of Congress. "Mr. Putnam feels that he has a large undertaking before him, and that he cannot at this time grasp it as a whole. Necessarily he must take it in detail, and a detail which can only be worked out day by day. He must come to know his subordinates thoroughly, to know the demands of their positions, and to have his own work unfolded to his understanding by daily experience.*

*"He is very chary of promising sweeping innovations at this time. It is probably a pretty good guess that he will not talk much along this line until he is ready to do something, and it is likely that one would not be far wrong in surmising that Mr. Putnam's own mind is not altogether made up upon reforms to be effected. He says himself that he has theories and ideas about the library, but he realizes that now he will have to consider facts, and he will weigh his theories carefully and consider them in the light of the conditions which surround him before he exploits them."*

"I am not insensible to the consideration of a policy, but if I were asked the direct question as to what it shall be I would have to reply that I have administered a library in Minneapolis, I have administered a library in Boston, but I have never administered the Library of Congress. The policy, I imagine, will be a question of the future."

... The impression which one gets from Mr. Putnam at this stage of the proceedings is that he is a conservative and cautious man, going slowly about his business, understanding it thoroughly. He will apply the knowledge that he has gained in other fields to the work before him, but with a regard for the conditions existing here, which may differ from those surrounding his labors heretofore. He says that in a great library the results of a mistake made at the outset becomes more embarrassing as time passes on and the library grows, and he has found it advisable to be absolutely certain before going ahead.

Mr. Putnam does not seem at all like a man who would be solicitous to make a great public show of his accomplishment of duty, and he realizes that in this case it may be a year or more before the results of his labor come to the surface. He loves hard work, he says, and has come to Washington with full appreciation of the fact that there is plenty of hard work before him.

This man who loved hard work, who refused to formulate or adopt a policy prematurely, was born George Herbert Putnam on September 20, 1861, in New York. He was the sixth son and tenth child of George Palmer Putnam and Victorine Haven Putnam. His early education was obtained in the city of his birth at James H. Morse's English and Classical School. He then entered Harvard, where, in his second year, he was awarded honors in classical studies. In 1883 he graduated *magna cum laude*, wearing the coveted Phi Beta Kappa key. The following year he studied law at Columbia University and then became a librarian. Surely at that time he had no idea what a hold he and librarianship would have on each other.

Continuing his legal studies he accepted the invitation to become librarian of the Minneapolis Athenaeum and began his work in October of 1884. Minneapolis was a young and vigorous city at that time. Culture was exerting a strong attraction, and the Athenaeum had been founded in 1860 with funds derived from a lecture by Bayard Taylor. As yet, however, there was no public library there, the Athenaeum being maintained by stockholders and subscribers. But public sentiment had been aroused and a municipal library was highly desired. Miss Gratia A. Countryman has described the situation vividly:

Just at this time the Athenaeum directors appointed a cultured young Harvard man as librarian. Mr. Herbert Putnam came with an unusually fine background of book knowledge, and with an acquaintance with eastern libraries and their methods. He began his new work . . . with energy and enthusiasm.

He could not have entered the city at a more opportune time, and the Athenaeum directors could not have found a man with more ability to solve their problems. He identified himself at once with all of the educational projects of the city, and brought the vigor and keenness of his active mind to the solution of his own task with a clear vision of its possibilities.

There were other active movements besides the library going on in the city. The Minnesota Academy of Science was discussing the necessity of a building to house its growing museum. The directors of the Society of Fine Arts, which had been organized the previous year and had held a very successful loan exhibition, were considering how and where they could establish a permanent art exhibit.

. . . It needed the work of a leader to bring committees from each of these organizations together to discuss the possibility of a common building to house them all, and later to propose to the city council that it be made a municipal undertaking. He [Putnam] was that leader.

No more than two months elapsed before the directors of the Athenaeum abandoned plans for a new building of their own. If a public library was to be established, the Athenaeum was willing to share. And the Academy of Science and the Society of Fine Arts came to similar agreement. The essential legislative act was passed on February 28, 1885, and the public library became a legal entity.

The public library building, however, was still some years off, and Putnam had to perform his duties as the Athenaeum librarian. Working in a small upstairs room he modernized antiquated methods, revised the charging system, initiated a new system of cataloging and classification, and gave readers access to alcoves so they could find desired volumes for themselves. He provided a breath of fresh air in a stale, old-fashioned environment. In 1888 he was charged to make a trip to Europe to purchase books for both the Athenaeum and the new public library, having been elected public librarian that same year.

He held this double job when the new public library was opened in December of 1889. It was thronged by Minneapolitans, driven by desire to read and by avid curiosity, and it is not surprising to learn that some confusion resulted. Unexpected demands exhausted the inadequate supply of

books, and a new and inexperienced staff provided delays and disappointments. Miss Countryman reported: "Only the tact and the sympathetic hearing and explanation of Mr. Putnam saved the reputation of the new library service during that first winter. . . . He modified rules and simplified methods and red tape whenever it could be done to the advantage of readers without weakening service."

Putnam was also such a believer in the benefits of libraries that he opened two branches in Minneapolis during his first year in office and established a third branch the year after. If financial resources had been more plentiful and personal circumstances more favorable he would doubtless have accomplished much more than he did.

Even so, his achievement was notable, both professionally and romantically. The year following his arrival in Minneapolis he was admitted to the Minnesota bar, and the year after that he married Charlotte Elizabeth Munroe of Cambridge, Mass. Ahead of them lay 42 years of happy married life. And their two daughters were both born in the midwestern metropolis—Shirley in 1887, Brenda in 1890.

A great misfortune befell Minneapolis at the close of 1891. Putnam resigned on December 31, and the family returned to the East. Mrs. Putnam's mother was ill, and the family deemed it advisable to be near her. Miss Countryman is again our witness in testifying to the dismay felt throughout the city when it learned that their librarian was leaving. And the board of the public library expressed its appreciation in these terms:

His knowledge of books, his patient attention to all the details of official duty, his unfailing courtesy, his readiness to attend to the wishes of all the patrons of the library, have made him a most excellent librarian, have commanded the admiration of the Board and have endeared him to the people of our city.

Barely in his thirties, young Putnam was well on his way to becoming the tallest little man in the world. Arriving in Minneapolis at a most auspicious moment and exercising his vision and wisdom in forming a coordinated municipal institution, he exerted a permanent influence in Minneapolis which will not soon be forgotten.

Back in Massachusetts Putnam was quickly admitted to the bar of Suffolk County and practiced law for several years, but he had already made his

mark as a librarian, a profession he would soon reenter and never leave. One opportunity he shunned, undoubtedly most wisely. In 1893 he was invited to become the librarian of Brown University, but he chose not to accept. He waited two more years and then, not yet 34, on February 11, 1895, he became director of the Boston Public Library. In the words of Congressman Lawrence Lewis, in a stirring tribute offered in 1939:

"With no solicitation . . . on his part, . . . [he was] selected by the trustees because of his proved capacity and brilliant executive reputation. . . ." This old institution had struggled along without a director for 2 years and had fallen into a condition approaching disorganization. The new building on Copley Square, "that superb palace of books, beautified by Puvion de Chavannes, Sargent, Abbey, St. Gaudens, and MacMonnies," had been recently completed, but it was to be Dr. Putnam's task to open it and make it available for public use. This he did with marked success.

The young librarian was a few inches taller!

It was Charles F. D. Belden, himself a successor of Putnam as director of the Boston Public Library, who eloquently described Putnam's achievement in Boston:

In casting about for the man who should take the library at this juncture and lead it into a larger life worthy of the noble building just completed, the trustees were fortunate in discovering Mr. Putnam, then engaged in the practice of law in Boston, after seven years of library work in Minneapolis. This opportunity was a unique one. The first great municipal library building in the country was placed in Mr. Putnam's hand, as a frame into which the oldest of large American public libraries was to be fitted. Thanks to his wisdom and skill, in a brief period of four years, the library expanded to fill the frame and almost outgrew it; and in making a modern institution of the Boston Public Library, he pointed the way for other libraries all over the country. From the time of his appointment, Mr. Putnam was given a free hand and the wholehearted support of the Board of Trustees. His four years of administration gave daily proof of the wisdom of his selection. Quiet, alert, industrious, he saw unerringly the next thing to be done; he inspired confidence in both trustees and staff, and his power of achievement always kept pace with his vision.

Apparently Putnam left no aspect of the institution's work untouched. He established a children's room, surely one of the earliest in America; he increased the flow of books between headquarters and the branches; he extended and encouraged interlibrary loans with other libraries; he added an hour—until 10 p.m.—to the library's

working day; he organized a Special Libraries Department and opened a separate newspaper room. A smattering of statistics will testify to the city's library health: in 1894 home circulation amounted to 832,113; in 1898 it jumped to 1,245,842. In 1894 the Boston Public Library claimed to hold 610,375 volumes; four years later the claim was advanced to 716,050.

His relations with the staff were particularly harmonious, and a peculiarly modern note is found in Belden's description: "The extension of greater recognition to women in library work was a significant feature of Mr. Putnam's administration. Women were freely advanced or appointed to positions which, a few years previously, they were thought to be incapable of filling." He freely and firmly assigned responsibility where it belonged. He was frankly but kindly critical. He stimulated his senior officers and other employees to their best efforts, and all who worked for him experienced a rare satisfaction. His reward was lasting admiration and generous homage.

The new and magnificent Boston building, with all its beautification, was not an unmixed blessing. Splendid though it was, many elements proved inefficient, and in his last year in Massachusetts, Putnam, supported by his trustees and municipal authorities, effected numerous changes. These greatly improved all aspects of library work.

Belden concluded his laudatory remarks by quoting the official tribute of March 24, 1899, given by Putnam's Boston Trustees when they knew he was leaving:

In accepting the resignation of Mr. Herbert Putnam as Librarian, the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston desire to put upon their records the following votes:

That they recognize the harmonious and helpful relations between the Librarian and the Trustees from the day he accepted the office; the remarkable administrative qualities he has shown—in directing the alterations by which the Library Building has been so well fitted for its purposes—in increasing to so large a degree the interest the public takes in the Library, until today it has a larger constituency than any other—in instituting so successfully the work of the Public Library in connection with the Public Schools—and in making the public realize that this institution created and supported by it, really belongs to it, and needs its ever-enlarging patronage and generosity.

That they appreciate the feeling which leads Mr. Putnam, at much personal sacrifice, to give up his position here to take charge of the Congressional Library at



Washington, and his desire to make it the culmination of the Library system of this country, and in time one of the great Libraries of the world.

That their highest regard goes with him in the difficult work he is about to assume, and their faith in his gifts to bring it to the most successful issues.

And then Belden was impelled to add this expressive coda: "The Public Library of the city of Boston takes pride in the thought that it gave him to the nation, and that his fruitful four years in Boston helped in training him for his great career of service in Washington."

With little thought of ever taking charge of the Library of Congress Putnam had been called to Washington, under the terms of a Senate resolution of May 5, 1896, to give his views as to the Library's future. The new and still magnificent building across the street from the Capitol was nearing completion; it would open the following year. A new Librarian was needed, and Congress wanted the best advice possible regarding its leadership and development. Among the persons testifying were Ainsworth Rand Spofford, Librarian of Congress from 1864 to 1897, Bernard Green, superintendent of the building, Melvil Dewey, George H. Baker, William I. Fletcher, Rutherford P. Hayes, W. H. Brett, W. T. Harris, S. P. Langley, and Herbert Putnam. According to a bill in the House of Representatives the new Librarian, when selected, would have "complete and entire control of the Library proper, including the copyright business"—incorporated in the Library of Congress in 1870—and would "prescribe rules and regulations under which his assistants are to be employed and have the custody and management of the Library." This last provision changed completely the earlier law which gave such authority to the Joint Committee on the Library. The Legislative Appropriations Act, approved February 19, 1897, put the Librarian in charge of the reorganized Library of Congress.

The 34-year-old Putnam explained the operations of the Boston Public Library, how he made appointments, how the cataloging was done, and how the library formulated policy for bibliographical service and activity. His testimony and advice included his views on the qualifications of the Librarian and the mission of the Library.

The first necessity for the Library of Congress, Putnam maintained, was adequate staffing by persons expert in their fields. When asked about

the older system of appointments being made by the joint committee, he replied: "I believe in centering responsibility. I should say that if the Librarian of Congress is absolutely free from political control in the selection of his men, if he will not have to recommend persons who are forced upon him, then it is safe to leave it to him. . . ." And he submitted the following statement respecting the qualifications of the Library of Congress's chief executive:

This should be a library, the foremost library in the United States—a national library—that is to say, the largest library in the United States and a library which stands foremost as a model and example of assisting forward the work of scholarship in the United States. And you will be spending for it a sum that must be nearly \$500,000 a year to make it what your committee seem to purpose that it should be made. I should suppose that you would have to have for the administration of that library a force exceeding numerically 200 employees, perhaps 250. I should suppose that the man who is to have the final administration of that library must have above all things else administrative ability—the same kind of man who is to manage the property or interest of any large corporation, is to handle large funds, is to manage a large force of employees; such a one should have administrative capacity. It is as much required in a library as anywhere else. . . . I do not believe that your chief administrative officer, attending properly to the business problems of the library, need be a profound bibliographer or need to know the most of all the persons in the library as to what the library contains. I should regard him as bearing a relation to the library something similar to that corresponding to, or borne by, the president of a university to the several departments of that university. . . . I presume that the modern college president considers that his chief function is to secure the best men for each department, and to administer on a large scale this business, and see that the business is conducted properly, and to secure great efficiency, and more especially at the beginning, to consider and determine the scope of the work to be undertaken, to form plans on a large scale which might serve as recommendations to the committee . . . with reference to the larger service to be rendered. I don't say a knowledge of specialties, in addition to these capacities, would be inconsistent with them, but it seems to me that those capacities are undoubtedly necessary, and that the chief executive must have them preeminently. (Lucy Salamanca, pp. 240–41)

Back in Boston Putnam reflected on his remarks and wrote to the joint committee to correct "inadvertences which were certain to occur in such testimony given offhand." He admitted that his statement might have been "ill-balanced," that perhaps he laid too much stress on the quality of



the head librarian being a "man of affairs . . . rather than the man of books." He had slighted the latter quality, and he wanted the Congress to understand that its new Librarian "should know enough of the literary side of the Library, of bibliography, etc., to appreciate intelligently the needs of the several departments of specialized work."

In stressing the necessity of order and systematization Putnam paid tribute to Ainsworth Rand Spofford, soon to become the Chief Assistant Librarian. "In other words," said Putnam, "the time had come when Mr. Spofford's amazing knowledge of the Library shall be embodied in some form which shall be capable of rendering a service which Mr. Spofford as one man and mortal can not be expected to render." (Lucy Salamanca, pp. 241-42). In 1908, when Spofford died, Putnam offered another, more extensive and more glowing tribute to his predecessor once removed.

It will be noticed that in his testimonial statement Putnam anticipated the Library of Congress being defined as the "national library," and he frequently referred to it as such in reports and addresses. In effect it is the national library, and Putnam's instincts were right as he used this early appellation.

On July 31, 1897, the Library of Congress in the Capitol was closed, and the onerous task of moving the contents to the new building was begun. Thirty days earlier, on July 1, John Russell Young, 57 years old, was appointed Librarian of Congress, and Ainsworth Rand Spofford, 75 years old, became Chief Assistant Librarian. On November 1 the move was completed and the public admitted. The present was bright and the future most promising. But on Christmas Eve, 1898, the new Librarian suffered a fall from which he failed to recover, and on January 17, 1899, he passed away. J. C. M. Hanson described what happened immediately:

Again, there swooped down on the President [McKinley] and Congress a host of aspirants to a position which many of them must have considered one of comparative leisure, a sinecure in which they might pass their declining years amid pleasant and dignified surroundings, holding occasional intercourse with authors living and dead, and meeting statesmen, diplomats, and other distinguished and representative people from various parts of the country and the world. . . .

Among the librarians who finally rallied to the aid of the library, perhaps no one stood out more prominently than Richard R. Bowker. He was not only a bibliog-

rapher and librarian, but a business executive, an author, a journalist, and a man of affairs, who knew just what to do under the circumstances and how to do it. No better man could have been secured to sponsor the cause of the library and librarians at the Executive Mansion than he. With William C. Lane, President of the A. L. A., and other members of its Executive Board, he went to Washington and secured action which has had a far-reaching effect on education and librarianship in America.

So Herbert Putnam, now 37 years old, was nominated Librarian of Congress on March 13, 1899, began his active duties on April 5, while Congress was in recess, and was confirmed by the Senate on December 12. The story of other aspirants to the job, particularly that of one Samuel J. Barrows, is diverting, but scarcely part of this essay. Putnam was young, highly intelligent, without library training but with ample library experience, and ready to battle for the future of—a national library. He was also a man of affairs. Shortly after coming to Washington he was elected to membership in the Cosmos Club on May 8 and a month later delivered the commencement address at the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore (June 13). The present was still bright, and the future was ever more promising.

What did he find as he entered his new office? He tells us in his article "The National Library: Some Recent Developments" (in *Bulletin of the American Library Association*, September 1928):

It is the recent period which I am to review. But to explain it . . . I should first remind you of the conditions existing when the collections entered the new building thirty-one years ago, and indeed still substantially existing when I viewed them with a responsible eye. . . .

The printed collections lacked (1) a systematic classification, (2) a shelf-list, (3) a catalog, save a manuscript author-list on cards as compiled at the Capitol by an inadequate staff, without adequate bibliographic apparatus. There was the beginning of an organization for classification, shelf-listing and cataloging; but for those three processes and the accession work also, the staff numbered but twenty-seven persons. The entire roll apart from the building force, but including the Copyright, comprised but 130.

The annual appropriation for increase was \$30,000; for printing and binding, \$25,000. And the total annual appropriations were about \$300,000.

Quoting from the same source Lawrence Lewis also drew from Putnam's own words:

The building stood as planned: the outside quadrangle, the octagonal reading room centered within it, and the

three main book stacks radiating from it—north, east and south—to the quadrangle itself. For the accommodation of material there were those three stacks, providing for about 1,800,000 volumes; for the accommodation of readers the main, and the periodical reading rooms; and for the accommodation of the service, besides the Copyright Office, spaces and equipment there and there in the outside quadrangle. The printed books and pamphlets had been shelved in the stacks; the manuscripts were cased in a corner pavilion; but the maps, music, and prints remained still on the floors or on packing cases.

Lewis then proceeded to enumerate Putnam's triumphs over the next quarter century and the benefits they brought to the American library system.

Putnam, of course, could not have gained his triumphs alone. He needed and depended on expert help and advice. William Warner Bishop wrote of Putnam's good fortune in finding some first-rate men on the job and his knack for selecting equally good men as operations and influence expanded.

Herbert Putnam found some remarkable men on the staff of the library in 1899. It is to his lasting credit that he saw and proved their power, fitted them to the work for which each was most suited, and sustained them in their daily service. Solberg, Hanson, Martel, Griffin, Phillips, Hutcheson, are names which have meant much to American librarianship. To them he added with the years others—Sonneck, Engel, Martin, Ford, Hunt, Ashley, Hastings, Boyd, Meyer, Parsons, Slade, Harris, and now Jameson, to mention but a few. And he gave them helpers. Adamant to political pressure . . . he drew to the library an array of skilled librarians unequalled in America. In the years of the World War this force suffered much depletion. Happily it has recovered and the newer classification of government employees gives it a reasonably sound professional status. The salaries have never been high, but there has always under Dr. Putnam been distinction in working in the Library of Congress, a distinction which has brought and kept a strong staff.

In those early days of Putnam's administration the Librarian welcomed new staff members in person. An affectionate reminiscence is provided by Harriet Wheeler Pierson, who arrived in Washington on May 31, 1900:

"Washington" called the conductor as the train slid into the old Pennsylvania Station at 6th and B Streets, N.W. . . . The cataloger stepped down from the car with mixed feelings. . . .

It was the custom for those newly come to the Library to report at the office of the Librarian. . . . Ushered into the room of simple and appropriate elegance, embarrassment was banished for the timid cataloger by the

genial smile of the Librarian, whose brief word was to be remembered through all future years, "We expect great things of you." "Great things of *me*?" thought the cataloger. "I must not fail him. I will do my best, whatever that may be; not great things, for I am not capable of that, but—my best."

Such was the inspiration the Librarian engendered.

Another of the first and greatest needs of the Library was a new or vastly revised classification scheme. Having heard that Melvil Dewey was revamping the decimal classification, Putnam wrote to his elder colleague in Albany on April 6, 1900, asking for further particulars. He also asked for permission to make certain modifications rendering the Dewey system more practicable to the needs of the Library of Congress. But after months of intensive investigation he concluded that the Dewey system was not suitable, that no existing scheme could be applied without considerable change, and he determined that an entirely new schedule should be drafted. As a result the Library of Congress classification came into being, generally acknowledged to be the best for libraries of great size.

After nearly a year in office Putnam read in the

*Putnam (fifth from left) and his staff on the steps of the first Library of Congress building, 1914. Included are officers of the Library. Front row, from the left: Thorvald Solberg, register of copyrights, Allen R. Boyd, chief clerk, Jessica L. Farnum, secretary of the Library, Appleton P. C. Griffin, Chief Assistant Librarian, Putnam, Bernard R. Green, superintendent of buildings and grounds, and John V. Würdemann, captain of the watch.*

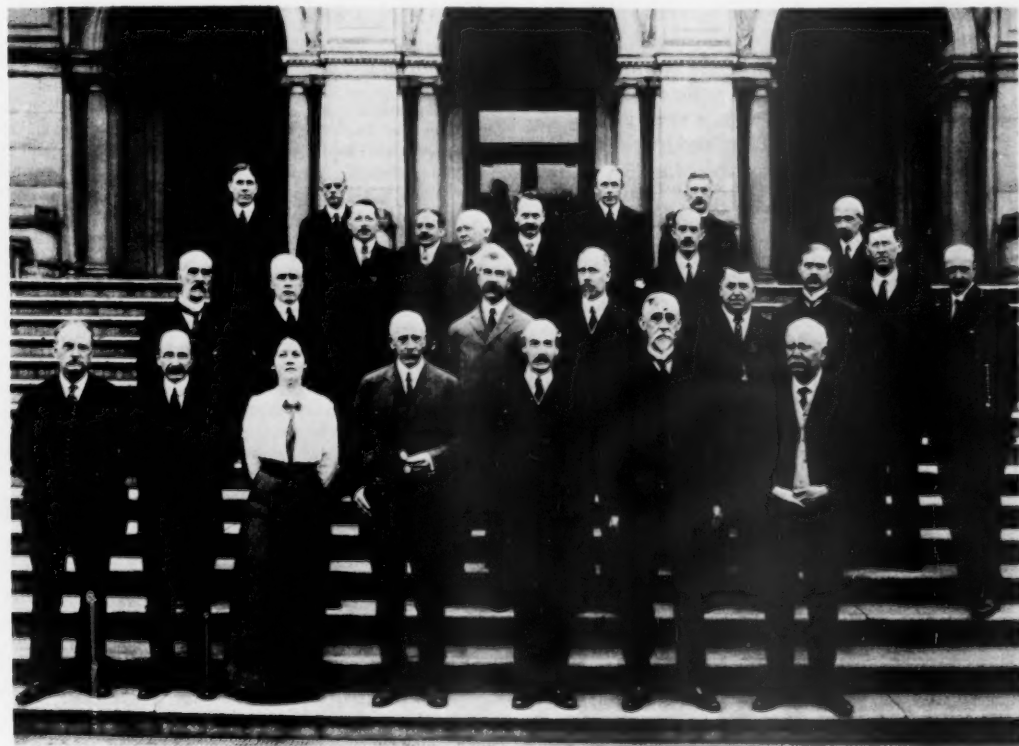
*Second row: Francis H. Parsons, assistant in charge of the Smithsonian Deposit, Gaillard Hunt, chief of the Division of Manuscripts, Hermann H. B. Meyer, chief of the Division of Bibliography, William Warner Bishop, superintendent of the Reading Room, David E. Roberts, assistant in the Division of Prints, Oscar G. T. Sonneck, chief of the Division of Music, Charles H. Hastings, chief of the Card Division, and Oswald Welti, assistant in the Division of Maps.*

*Back row: William Adams Slade, chief of the Division of Periodicals, Arthur Kimball, in charge of the Binding Office, Israel Schapiro, in charge of the Semitic Division, Henry J. Harris, chief of the Division of Documents, Ernest Bruncken, assistant register of copyrights, J. David Thompson, in charge of the Legislative Reference Service, Frederick W. Ashley, chief of the Order Division, Samuel M. Croft, in charge of the Mail Division, Charles Martel, chief of the Catalog Division, and Clarence W. Perley, chief classifier. LC-USZ62-6013A*

*Washington Post* of March 25, 1900: "A number of rare and costly books forming a part of one of the most valuable collections of the Congressional Library, were stolen on Thursday night from the Library reading room," also that "thefts of books are becoming more and more frequent, and—hardly a week passes without several volumes being stolen." Putnam was not a man to miss an opportunity and he wrote a letter the next day to the joint committee. He admitted the possibility of the theft of *one* book—which was promptly recovered. He pointed out the difficulty of finding desired volumes and said there was no place a reader could peruse a rare volume except in the Librarian's office. And he persuaded the Congress to grant the estimates requested in that year's appeal for appropriations!

Early in 1900 he could say that the Library of Congress, in sheer accumulation of holdings, exceeded any library in the Western Hemisphere. It

contained 850,000 printed books; 250,000 pamphlets; 26,000 manuscripts; 50,000 maps; 277,000 musical compositions; over 70,000 prints, as well as an estimated 140,000 volumes and pamphlets still undigested from the Copyright Office. But these were just the beginning of the collection which Putnam envisioned as being richly and comprehensively international and capable of serving Congress and scholarship as no other single institution could. On October 20, 1900, he made a valiant effort to obtain the famous John Carter Brown Library to grace his shelves, and he failed. It went instead to Brown University in Providence, R.I. But as Mr. Mearns wrote in reviewing the situation: ". . . it is not as exemplifying an essay in futility that Mr. Putnam's eloquent pronouncement has been transcribed. It is, rather, because of its magnificently accurate projection of the Library of Congress and its future stature in the world of learning that it has been recovered from the



oblivion to which it was consigned more than fifty-five years ago. As prophecy it commands respect, because what it foretold has come to pass. As an illustration of his assurance, awareness, aspiration it is unexcelled." (*Herbert Putnam, 1861-1955*; p. 33.)

Service, too, was uppermost in Putnam's mind. In 1901 the Library of Congress was authorized to lend books outside of the District of Columbia, and interlibrary loan was a fait accompli. That same year Putnam initiated steps leading to the sale of printed cards to libraries all over the country. Within two years (according to Charles A. Goodrum, p. 39) the Library was producing cards at the rate of 225 titles daily. Libraries throughout the United States were rapidly learning to depend on the Library of Congress for most of their cataloging.

On October 15, 1901, the Librarian ventured to send a long message to President Theodore Roosevelt stressing the importance of the Library of Congress, the role it should play in the fields of education and scholarship, its recent growth, its present organization, and its position as a national investment. Near the close he asked this question: "Has not the time come for some reference to it in a statement which includes a summary by the Chief Executive . . .?" The President responded by including two paragraphs in his first annual message to Congress, on December 3, 1901:

Perhaps the most characteristic educational movement of the past fifty years is that which has created the modern public library and developed it into broad and active service. There are now over five thousand public libraries in the United States, the product of this period. In addition to accumulating material, they are also striving by organization, by improvement in method, and by co-operation, to give greater efficiency to the material they hold, to make it more widely useful, and by avoidance of unnecessary duplication in process to reduce the cost of its administration.

In these efforts they naturally look for assistance to the Federal library, which, though still the Library of Congress, is the one national library of the United States. Already the largest single collection of books on the Western Hemisphere, and certain to increase more rapidly than any other through purchase, exchange, and the operation of the copyright law, this library has a unique opportunity to render to the libraries of this country—to American scholarship—service of the highest importance. It is housed in a building which is the largest and most magnificent yet erected for library uses. Resources are now being provided which will develop the collection properly, equip it with the apparatus and service necessary for its effective use, render its bibliographic work

widely available, and enable it to become, not merely a center of research, but the chief factor in great co-operative efforts for the diffusion of knowledge and the advancement of learning. (*Herbert Putnam, 1861-1955*; pp. 35-36)

Almost immediately after his inauguration Putnam was deluged with offers of honorary degrees and invitations to be a speaker at college commencements. He accepted quite a few. On June 3, 1903, he spoke at the commencement of Columbian University (now George Washington University) of Washington, D.C., and in his remarks, inimitably phrased, he proved that he was not a conventional librarian but a champion of intellectual freedom and independent thought. Libraries, after all, are only a means to an end. On that day he said:

I have kept my promise to abstain from the trite theme of the uses of books. You know more of these than I can tell you,—or than you yourselves will ever know again. This occasion is for you the apex,—the summit of the hill of knowledge,—unsullied by experience. It is not merely a parting of the ways,—it is a parting of the wise. You will never be so wise again. You will know more; but you will never again be so wise. You will never again have the interest in books that you have had in the past few years, nor the confidence in their solution of the problems of life that you have today. The book which is now to concern you is the book of life. The book of life isn't easy reading. And it has no index. Rather, I should say, it has an index, and the index is where indexes should be—at the end. But it is shut to you till you reach the end. Indeed it is a book which each of you must not merely read but must write for himself. Write it fairly, write it sturdily, and it will be a book to last, even though it never find a publisher. It will at least form a section of that artful ledger, kept by the unerring accountant, which is to yield up its debits and credits against you at the final commencement day.

Cotton Mather used to oblige his children "to retire and ponder on that question 'What should I wish I had done if I were now dead.'" A salutary but somewhat sombre diversion,—to which I shall not now invite you, though I might find precedents. The world is a cheerful world today; and the most interesting world that ever was; and the book that your life is to write may if you like be a cheerful and interesting book, and a helpful one; for full of service as the world appears, help is still needed.

It is a fashion of commencement addresses to advise you how to write it. I am not the one to advise you, and I shall not try. I have undertaken rather to say something of the opportunities which you are leaving than of those which lie before you. If I should say anything of these latter, it would be only to urge you to apply to them the ideals, the standards, and as many as possible of the methods for which the academic life stands. *Freedom* is



one: the academic freedom, which follows an argument to its consequences, however inconvenient; freedom to form an opinion, and to hold, and to alter it, even though it differ from your neighbor's; *tolerance* for his opinion though it differ from yours; *respect* for the accumulated judgment of the past as against the whim or emotion of the present.

Throughout his career as Librarian of Congress Herbert Putnam was careful about his appointments. He wanted expert subject specialists and highly trained technicians. He skillfully rejected patronage applicants, but was happy to receive recommendations for eligible candidates. An elite staff was his great objective. And when a position was of critical importance he vigorously sought a salary for it which would be commensurate. Mr. Mearns quotes from a communication in this vein which Putnam sent to the secretary of the treasury: "This position [Chief of the Division of Manuscripts] became vacant September 1st [1901]. I am holding it vacant until the salary shall be placed at a sum which will enable me to secure for it a thoroughly adequate person. This division deals with the material which forms one of the two greater divisions in a national library. . . . The interests involved are altogether too important to be entrusted to a second-rate man." (*Herbert Putnam, 1861-1955*; p. 34)

Equally desirous of strengthening the Library's international holdings Putnam successfully negotiated the purchase of Gennadius Vasilievich Yudin's fabulous collection of Slavica in 1907. His "responsible eye" was never closed.

In 1908 Putnam instinctively responded with humanitarian sympathy to the passing of Ainsworth Rand Spofford, who died on August 11. His fair and laudatory article appeared in two journals that fall, November 19 in the *Independent* and December in the *Library Journal*. Spofford was in the unique position of having been Librarian of Congress, from 1864 to 1897, then becoming the Chief Assistant Librarian. The following two paragraphs convincingly show how Putnam and Spofford both profited from the situation.

To give over to another the accustomed reins of authority is at no time easy; to give them over at the moment when the institution is emerging from a pinched and narrow to a spacious and glorious life; from the life which has been a struggle to the opportunities for which one has struggled: to give them over then, and with them the prestige and the privilege of the office; such a surrender is hard indeed. The man who, like Dr. Spofford, can make it without a murmur, before or after,

is of incredible rarity. The man of his years who, having for two generations been chief executive, can not merely subordinate, but endear himself to his successor, and never waver in fidelity to the institution nor enthusiasm for its interests—such a man has achieved a feat beside which mere feats of memory are of trivial moment.

With him, however, this was not a feat, but nature; the ordinary expression of a nature absolutely loyal, consistently unselfish, enduringly childlike. It will be a sad day for any profession when such a nature is referred to as merely "quaint," as if an anachronism. Particularly will it be a sad day for our profession, with its present stress upon system and mechanism. The age, indeed—our calculating age—requires these: the masses of material to be dealt with, the number and variety of needs to be met, the demand that they be met with promptness and precision. System and mechanism are now necessary auxiliaries; but they cannot be substitutes. And I, associated with them, under duty to promote them, shall not cease to be grateful for the nine years which have given me near contact with one who signified so much and so deeply without regard to them. To me, indeed, Ainsworth Spofford was more than an individual; he was an institution. And with him the continuity has been broken, an order has past, for which no "new order," however efficient, can compensate.

Putnam was no mean poet, and to his eulogy he appended these stanzas:

A. R. S.  
1825-1908

#### The Epilogue

He Toiled long, well, and with Good Cheer  
In the Service of Others  
Giving his Whole, Asking Little  
Enduring patiently, Complaining  
Not at all  
With small Means  
Effecting Much

\* \* \*

He had no Strength that was not Useful  
No Weakness that was not Lovable  
No Aim that was not Worthy  
No Motive that was not Pure

\* \* \*

Ever he Bent  
His Eye upon the Task  
Undone  
His Soul upon the Stars  
His Heart upon  
The Sun

\* \* \*

Bravely he Met  
His Test  
Richly he Earned  
His Rest



Putnam was never one to forget or neglect the literary hobbies of persons in high authority. Knowing President Woodrow Wilson's penchant for reading mystery novels he sent a supply to the White House, and May 22, 1913, the Chief Executive penned him an appreciative note saying: "Thank you sincerely for your courtesy in personally attending to my modest wish for detective stories. I am sure those that you sent me will keep me going for some time." (*Herbert Putnam, 1861-1955*; pp. 85-86)

In 1911 Congress seemed to think that its Library was somewhat deficient in supplying the legislative assistance it had a right to expect. When several bills were introduced for the creation of a legislative reference and bill-drafting bureau, Putnam prepared a special report which was clear and to the point. He suggested that the Library had, for many years, rendered the service commonly sought from a legislative office. It had prepared bibliographies and reading lists on all sorts of legislative questions; it had been ever ready to advise Congressmen on the best sources of information; it was eager to make available all of the Library's vast resources to the nation's lawmakers. And he gave precise details of the operations a legislative reference bureau must perform:

It undertakes not merely to classify and to catalogue, but to draw off from a general collection the literature—that is, the data—bearing upon a particular legislative project. It indexes, abstracts, compiles. It acquires extra copies of society publications and periodicals and breaks these up for the sake of the articles pertinent to a particular subject. It clips from newspapers; and it classifies the extracts, the compilations, the articles, and the clippings in a scrapbook, or portfolio, or vertical file, in such a way that all material relating to that topic is kept together and can be drawn forth at a moment's notice. To printed literature it often adds written memoranda as to fact and even opinion as to merit, which it secures by correspondence with experts.

The above work, which organizes and concentrates all the data pertinent to a question in such form as to be readily responsive, is beyond the abilities of the Library with its present organization. The Library would gladly undertake it; it could undertake it without additional appropriation for the material itself, so far as this is in printed form; but it would require for it an enlargement of its present Divisions of Law, Documents, and Bibliography, and in addition the creation of a new division under the title of a Legislative or Congressional Reference Division.

In transmitting his report to Congress he wrote a

letter which emphasized certain important principles. Perhaps the most significant one was:

That for the work to be scientific (i.e. having only truth as its object) it must be strictly nonpartisan; and that, therefore, whatever the appointing or administrative authority, the selection of the experts and the direction of the work should by law and in fact be assuredly nonpartisan.

For several years the matter was unsettled, but action was finally taken in 1915 when the appropriation bill for that fiscal year included authorization for the establishment of a Legislative Reference Service. (Mearns: *The Story up to Now*; pp. 199-200)

It was also in 1915, though his interest was years older, that Putnam carried further his endeavors in magnificently enlarging the Library's collection of oriental literature. And his zeal remained constant. Before long he could boast of having accumulated the largest collection of Orientalia outside of the Far East.

The United States entered the First World War in the spring of 1917. Putnam became the general director of the American Library Association's Library War Service, and he performed his duties nobly. His concern, his surprise, and his gratification are apparent in the foreword he provided to T. W. Koch's *War Service of the American Library Association*. There he wrote:

If, visiting a camp library, you should ask for a list of the books issued on a given day you would find some surprise. I have before me a typical such list. It leads off with Sullivan's American business law, followed by Moss' Applied Miner Tactics and Barker's Red Cross in France. Next come five volumes on physics, four on electricity, two on chemistry, one on physiology, three on aviation, one on military signaling, one on agriculture, three on motors, ten—including Gerard and Gibson—on the war itself. Among other miscellaneous titles are Kipling's Departmental Ditties, Service's Rhymes of a Red Cross Man, Taylor's Practical Stage Directing, a life of Grant, a history of Missionaries and—The Iliad of Homer! And the fiction which forms half the list (less than it would at an ordinary library) is by no means

*On September 29, 1921, President Warren Harding signed an executive order to have the original manuscript copies of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States transferred from the Department of State to the Library of Congress. The next day, Secretary Charles Evans Hughes delivered the documents to the Librarian. LC-USZ62-00399*

negligible in quality; for it includes at least, Doyle, Fox, Wister, Conrad, Locke, London, Poe, Dumas and Mark Twain. For the matter of that the actual selection of fiction in the Camp Libraries is of a higher grade than that in the average public library.

At one typical camp a single day's circulation included books on the following: French history, mechanics, topography and strategy in war, self propelled vehicles, hand grenades, field entrenchments, bridges, chemistry, physics, astronomy, hydraulics, electricity, mediaeval history, calculus, civil engineering, geography, American history, surveying, materials of construction, general history, masonry, concrete. About three fourths of the books taken out were non-fiction.

And the reason for all the wartime library service was: "To make better men of the soldiers as well as to make better soldiers of the men."

The First World War had its own impact on the Library of Congress, and the Librarian was keenly aware of it. He wanted to maintain and bolster morale, which was suffering under economic strain and emotional upset. Miss Pierson, who had vowed to do her best when she joined the Library force years earlier, reproduced a letter Putnam wrote, on July 25, 1918, "to the Loyal Staff of the Library of Congress." Some of its passages cry for quotation:

A word, which, if I could, I would say to each of you individually:

You have much to discourage you in the present situation. Your expenses are increasing; your salaries aren't.

Meantime you see numerous of your associates going to positions elsewhere at salaries not merely higher than they were paid here, but higher than you are getting here for work of a higher grade. . . .

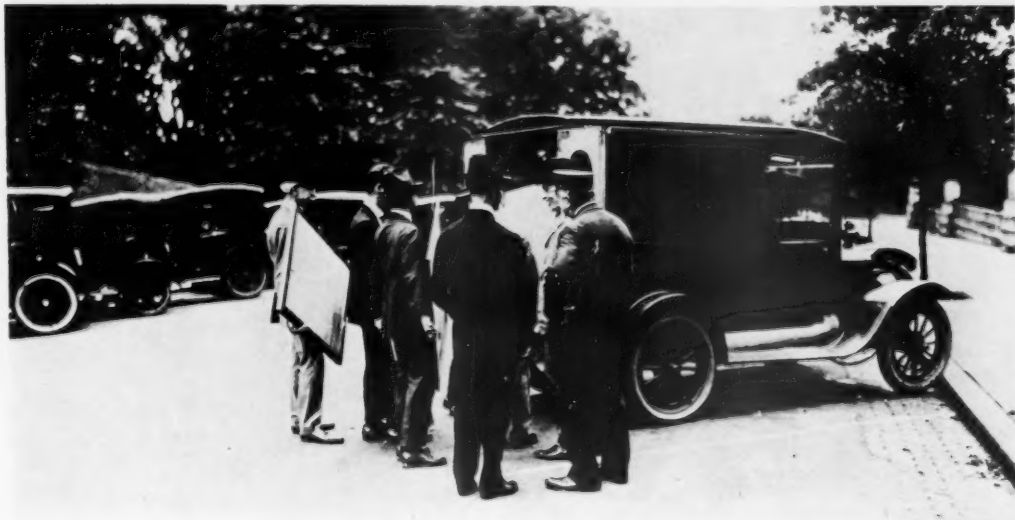
If you can't live on your salary here you can't be blamed for taking a higher one elsewhere. But don't for a moment believe that—outside of the fighting ranks themselves—there is any "war work" more necessary than that you are doing here. It is our country as a whole which is at war; it is our government *as a whole* which is its agent. And it needs to bring to bear in the conflict every one of the elements, every one of the forces, which makes for its efficiency. . . .

The Library has its part to play—an indispensable one. Its efficiency *must* be maintained. And you who, resisting temptations elsewhere, are aiding to maintain it, can as justly say that you are doing "war work" as any of those who leave it for a bureau with a military title.

You can feel also that in "standing by your job," patiently, steadily, at a serious personal sacrifice, you are proving a loyalty as unselfish—as fundamentally patriotic—as any shown in this crisis.

To thank you for it would seem to imply that it is a loyalty to me or to the Library, whereas it is the higher loyalty to a cause and a principle. But I want you to know how clearly I realize it, how deeply I value it, and how sure I am that in the end, and upon the final reckoning, it will secure the recognition it deserves.

On February 28, 1924, Putnam, happily and solemnly, placed the two manuscripts most precious to the history of the United States on exhibit. The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, engrossed on parchment, had recently been



transferred from the Department of State. Actually almost two and a half years had elapsed since President Harding signed the Executive Order, September 29, 1921, releasing the invaluable documents to the Library's custody. It included this paragraph:

This Order is issued at the request of the Secretary of State [Hughes], who has no suitable place for the exhibition of these muniments and whose building is believed to be not as safe a depository for them as the Library of Congress, and for the additional reason that it is desired to satisfy the laudable wish of patriotic Americans to have an opportunity to see the original documents upon

*President Calvin Coolidge and his wife, Grace Goodhue Coolidge, attended the dedication, on February 28, 1924, of the "shrine" where the parchment copies of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution were protected while in the keeping of the Library of Congress. Visitors were impressed, according to the Librarian's report of 1924, with "the provision for safeguarding the documents from touch and from injurious light, while insuring their complete visibility without formality." Also in attendance at the dedication were the secretary of state and representatives from Congress. National Photo Co. LC-USZ62-57285*

which rest their Independence and their Government.

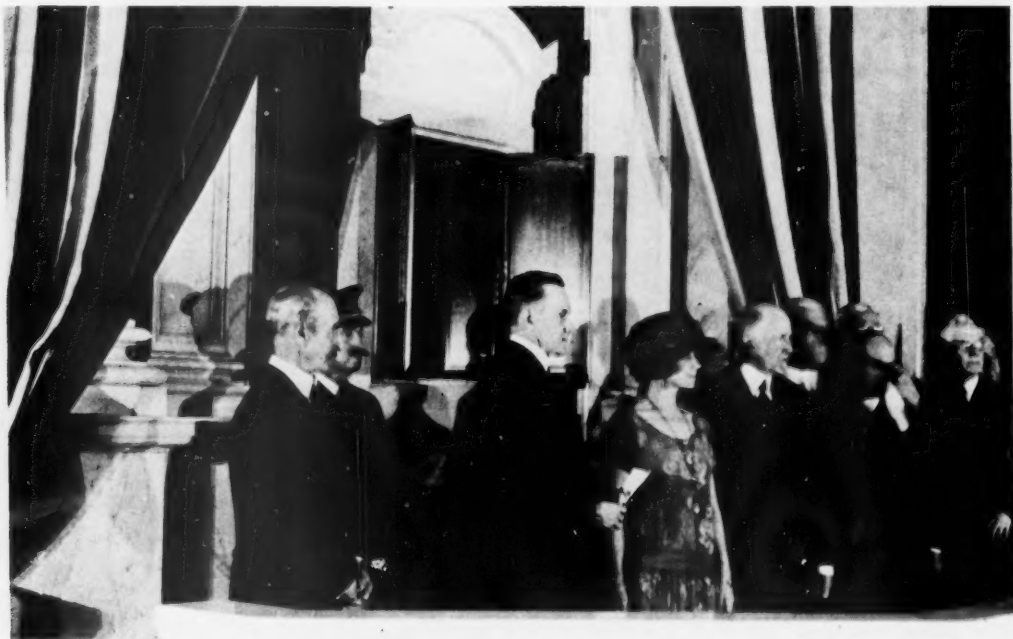
Warren G. Harding

Putnam himself brought the manuscripts to the Library and witnessed their being placed in a heavy steel safe where they reposed until they were displayed to the public. He described the unveiling ceremony briefly and with telling effect:

The installation of them, in the presence of the President, the Secretary of State, and a representative group from Congress took place on February 28 [1924], without a single utterance, save the singing of two stanzas of "America"—in which the entire company of onlookers joined. The impression upon the audience proved the emotional potency of documents animate with a great tradition.

And there they remained for more than a generation, until they were once again transported to their final and logical resting place, the National Archives, in special cases long in planning and long in construction. (Cf. Mearns: *The Story up to Now*; pp. 203-4.)

It was at this time, too, that Putnam responded to a congressional bill, enacted March 4, 1923, "to provide for the classification of civilian positions" in the federal service. It was a highly necessary act,



and Putnam had to submit recommendations to a commission representing the Bureau of the Budget, the Bureau of Efficiency, and the Civil Service Commission (Mearns: *The Story up to Now*; pp. 204-6). Mr. Mearns states clearly the complications confronting Putnam as he prepared his presentation. It consisted of five stages: "(1) Initial allocations by the several chiefs of divisions; (2) a review and revision of these by a commission of seven staff officials by the Chief Assistant Librarian; (3) opportunity to the several chiefs to submit further representations in support of decisions negated; (4) a final review by Mr. Putnam; and (5) the submission by Mr. Putnam of a formal communication to the Personnel Classification Board."

Stressing the uniqueness of the Library in terms of size, skills, and service, Putnam succinctly summarized its needs and his hopes:

As our National Library, and with . . . [its] varied responsibilities, it can not afford to have less than the best obtainable—

(1) Knowledge, experience, and judgment in the development of its collection;

(2) Technical perfection in its processes—classification, cataloguing, and the other treatment of material;

(3) Skill, training, and experience in reference work, bibliography and interpretation;

(4) In its consultative service (e.g., in law, art, music), specialists who are authorities in the subject matter;

(5) In its service to our highest tribunal and its bar, not merely the most comprehensive law library, but the most competent administration and interpretation;

(6) In its legislative service—effective apparatus as to all legislation enacted in every country, and experts who will digest it, the law, the facts, the authorities in matters of opinion: experts comparable at least to those who are employed by the interests seeking legislation.

A year later he wrote:

It was not to be expected . . . that the first applications of a scheme so comprehensive, on a basis professedly philosophic, could be free from inconsistencies, from discrepancies, and from individual hardship. All have been experienced. In the aggregate, however, they are not to be weighed against the vast benefits of the scheme itself—the decision for it, the adoption of it, the progress under it, and the acceptance by Congress of the resulting decisions.

Mr. Mearns points out that 20 years would have to pass before the inconsistencies and discrepancies and hardships were eliminated, and then concludes that Putnam "had fought a fight which was good."

The quality of Putnam's division chiefs had al-



Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge (1864-1953), whose endowment to the Library ensures the performance of music there as well as furthering the study and appreciation of it. LC-USP6-1532A

ways been distinguished. Oscar G. T. Sonneck, appointed chief of the Music Division in 1902, was the first of a noteworthy line of musicologists to give preeminence to the Library's music holdings, and he was followed by Carl Engel, who was succeeded by Oliver Strunk and Harold Spivacke. Engel, head of the Music Division from 1922 to 1934, occupied the post when an event occurred which, with the wholehearted support of the Librarian, led to the Library's unofficial designation as "world center of chamber music." This title, still unofficial, continues to apply.

Mrs. Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge (1864-1953), under the auspices of the Library of Congress, sponsored three concerts of chamber music in the Freer Gallery of Art on February 7, 8, and 9, 1924. Distinguished artists presented programs of mixed content. The way was paved to untold progress



and riches and artistry. Herbert Putnam and Carl Engel figured in the program.

Mrs. Coolidge, a thoroughly trained musician as pianist and composer, already nationally known as a munificent patroness of music, had sponsored festivals of chamber music in Pittsfield, Mass., since 1918. She described her advent to the Library of Congress in the following words:

After seven yearly festivals in Pittsfield and following an ever-widening area of musical experience and contacts, I came to realize that the activities begun on South Mountain ought to be perpetuated and that the best—perhaps the only—way to do that would be to institutionalize them. . . .

I received a suggestion which led to the solution about the future of my Festival. I had asked Frank Bridge and his wife to remain awhile in America and, for relaxation after our strenuous three days, to take a motor trip with me. After a visit to southern Virginia, we stopped at Washington, and, as sight-seers, were invited to take luncheon at the "Round Table," a gathering of the Chiefs of Divisions in the Library of Congress, presided over by its wonderful Librarian, Dr. Herbert Putnam. Naturally the conversation turned to the recent Berkshire Festival. I happened to be seated next to a certain Dr. Moore [Charles Moore, Manuscripts Division], who, while chatting about my musical affairs, rather pointedly asked me if I might not consider giving some such music to the Library of Congress. The only equipment for such a prospect seemed, at that time, to be an upright piano upon which, in the basement, music might be tried out or practiced.

Herbert Putnam organized the Round Table, a semiprofessional luncheon group, shortly after becoming Librarian. The regular partakers and the visitors all had one thing in common—a consuming interest in matters of intellectual and artistic concern. This interest engendered what would become the regularly scheduled chamber music festivals, as Mrs. Coolidge explained:

However, when, the following Spring, I sent to the Library two [actually three] chamber programs, Dr. Putnam borrowed from the Smithsonian Institution a delightful little auditorium in the Freer Gallery, and there my Pittsfield players opened a series of three concerts which, later, led to the establishment of the Coolidge Foundation and thus found a way to insure the perpetuation of my Festivals; the little Coolidge Auditorium . . . was built into a corner of one of the courts of the Library; a fund was accepted by President Coolidge and the Congress, and our first Washington Festival was given in October 1925. (Let me add—that both the Librarian and the Congress had to be persuaded; the former by a warm friend of mine and of music; the latter by the Librarian himself!)

In September of 1924 Putnam attended the chamber music festival which Mrs. Coolidge sponsored in Pittsfield. And it should be noted that the marble plaque on the east wall of the foyer of the Coolidge Auditorium, a striking likeness of Mrs. Coolidge, is a creation of the Librarian's daughter, Brenda Putnam.

Mrs. Coolidge's interest and purpose were quickly and permanently fulfilled. The auditorium was built, festival succeeded festival, all of the chamber music manuscripts commissioned by her or given to her were added to the Library's collections, and great artists and ensembles appear in the Library regularly. Generous patrons and patronesses have followed her example. She and Putnam achieved a revolution in library service that is still increasing in effectiveness as other libraries follow their initiative.

Far from the least result of her venture was the creation of the Library of Congress Trust Fund Board, authorized by Congress on March 3, 1925, to accept endowments and to pay to the Library a rate of interest which will last as long as our government endures. The Trust Fund Board was particularly dear to Putnam's heart. One of his ideals of library service was the rendering of interpretative assistance. He wanted consultants and holders of "chairs" who, familiar with the collections and with the fields they embraced, would aid the researcher in extracting all they had to offer. Endowments from private resources now made this possible.

Sometimes the collections blossomed out in unexpected directions, and Putnam, as gardener, was not one to inhibit their growth. A notable example occurred in 1926 when the famous magician Harry Houdini (born in 1874, his real name was Ehrich Weiss) died, bequeathing his famous collection to the Library of Congress. It was a notable acquisition, certainly off the beaten track and offering investigators esoteric fields to explore and cultivate. With the exception of his dramatic collection, all the fruits of his magic curiosity became the property of the American people. He was a student as well as a showman, and he had spent many years researching in libraries, browsing in bookshops, consulting catalogs, and advertising for long-sought titles. The Librarian's annual report for 1927 quotes Houdini's own description of the collection he had formed:



"I have spent a goodly part of my life in study and research," he wrote in his book "A Magician among the spirits." "During the last thirty years I have read every single piece of literature on the subject of spiritualism that I could. I have accumulated one of the largest libraries in the world on psychic phenomena, spiritualism, magic, witchcraft, demonology, evil spirits," etc.

Such a bequest was fully appreciated by Librarian Putnam.

Financial assistance from John D. Rockefeller, Jr., made possible the beginning of the National Union Catalog, announced by Putnam the following year, 1927. The Librarian of Congress was steadfastly pursuing his goals: augmenting the bibliographic apparatus and increasing the service to the nation's scholars. Additional financial aid from the same benefactor also made possible the acquisition of source materials—in copies and facsimiles—necessary for the penetrating study of American history.

On October 26, 1927, Putnam sent a communication to the president of the American Library Association. It had to do with censorship in public libraries and is a statement of which every American should be proud:

In the case of History—which isn't an exact science,—it [i.e., the public] has a right to expect there a representation of all serious views decently expressed. To provide it is the essence of the service of a public library in a free community. And to eject from a public library a sincere book, by a reputable author, on the ground that its views are erroneous, is to tyrannize over public opinion. Our American public wouldn't stand for it.

Applied generally and carried to an extreme, it would leave our libraries the expression of nothing but the prejudices which happen to be in authority at the moment. With the Democrats in authority it would bar books supporting the Republicans, with Catholics in authority it would bar the literature of Protestantism, with free trade in authority it would bar the literature of protection, with the empiricists in authority it would bar the literature of dogma, with an anarchist temporarily in authority it would eject the literature of law and order. The emasculated collection would represent nothing but the whim, the passion, or the self-interest temporarily in control, and be wiped out by the whim, the passion, or the self-interest that succeeds it. (Herbert Putnam papers, Manuscript Division)

On the eve of celebrating his 30th anniversary as Librarian of Congress Putnam modestly disclaimed what had already been achieved and boasted only of the Library's chief virtue. In an essay entitled "The National Library" he de-

clared: "We have far to go, and many levels still to reach. In even the fundamentals 'our house is not yet in order' and won't be till we have caught up with the classification, the cataloging and the production of the cards. There is, in fact, no single particular, save one, in which we are not defective. But that one is an asset. It is—optimism."

In his annual report for 1928 Putnam announced the initiation of another activity of vital importance to the American people. Thanks to the generosity of several individuals—Andrew Mellon, Mrs. Adolph C. Miller, Mrs. Alvin C. Parker, John Barton Payne—there was established a program "for the acquisition of American folk-song." Now called the Archive of Folk Song, it is the section of the Music Division which preserves and promotes the people's heritage of music, dance, and games, foreign as well as domestic. The collections have grown enormously both in mechanical recordings and in manuscripts, and the archive's success surely led to the creation of the Music Division's Recorded Sound Section, a development which followed Putnam's retirement. The Librarian was, however, always interested in recordings of every kind—classical, popular, and folk—and early encouraged the collecting of cylinders and discs.

As he entered his fourth decade as Librarian of Congress he was given a surprise party and presented with a festschrift entitled *Essays Offered to Herbert Putnam by His Colleagues and Friends on His Thirtieth Anniversary as Librarian of Congress, 5 April 1929*. Notable Congressmen, scholars, and librarians paid admiring and affectionate tribute to their subject, emphasizing the past without neglecting the present and the future. Fantasizing that future, Carl Engel, then chief of the Music Division, contributed an essay called "Concert A.D. 2025 in the Library of Congress," and he imaginatively recalled 20th-century events as though they were the happenings of a hundred years before. Most succinctly he wrote:

A third name [after Coolidge and Sonneck] must be associated with our commemoration tonight: that of Herbert Putnam. It is too well known, too well beloved by everyone who is familiar with the annals of this institution to require more than proud and thankful mention. Human events are shaped by personalities. The very things we are commemorating here tonight could not have come to pass, one hundred years ago, without the vision and the tact of Herbert Putnam, without the qual-

ities of mind and character that made him a great Librarian of Congress because he was a great person.

Later in 1929 Putnam was able to create an Aeronautics Division, and in 1930 he won the long sought authorization for the construction of the Library's Annex. His boasted—but not boastful—optimism seemed to be wholly justified.

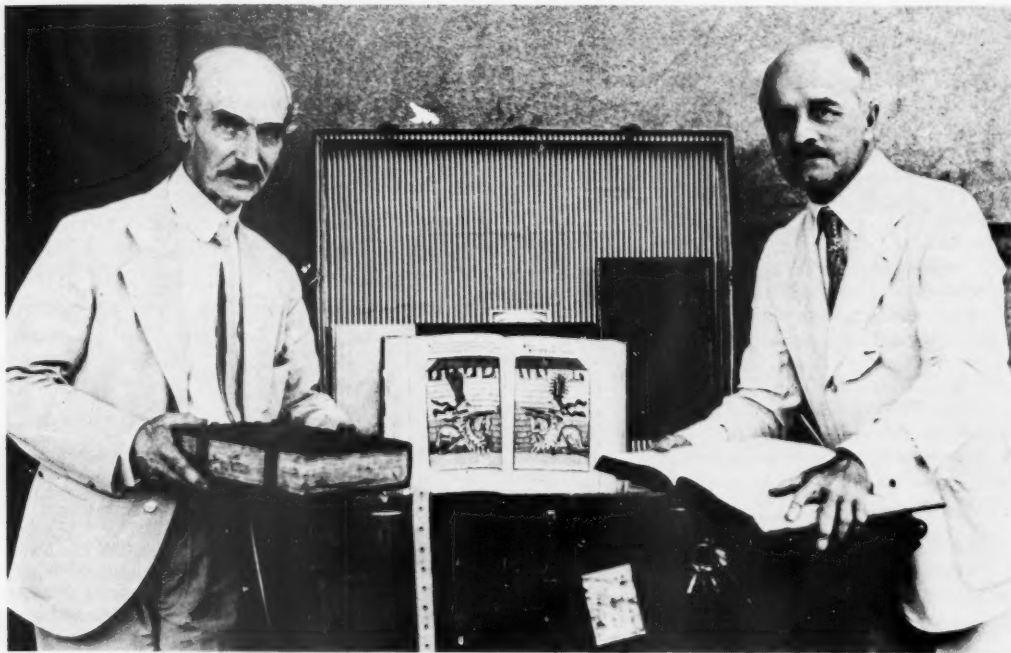
And it was also in 1930 that Putnam gained one of his greatest triumphs, the acquisition of the Library's Gutenberg Bible, one of the three perfect copies in existence and often referred to as a landmark in the history of civilization. The most important part of a most valuable collection, this volume will always be one of the Library's truly priceless treasures. The Librarian's account of obtaining it, in his annual report for 1930, deserves

*Otto H. F. Vollbehr's collection of 15th-century books included a vellum copy of the Gutenberg Bible and 3,000 other items. It was acquired by the Library of Congress in 1930. Dr. Vollbehr (on the right) was a retired scientist who collected this incunabula after World War I. LC-USZ62-57287*

to be quoted at some length. Once again his modesty comes to the fore.

The outstanding acquisition of the year . . . was that of the (Otto H. F.) Vollbehr collection of fifteenth century books (3,000 miscellaneous items, together with a copy on vellum—one of three perfect copies existing—of the Gutenberg forty-two-line Bible).

The history of this acquisition is singular and notable. The main collection, gathered by Doctor Vollbehr after the war and when conditions were peculiarly favorable, had for several years been in this country, having been brought here by him for exhibit at the Eucharistic Congress in Chicago. For the Gutenberg Bible he had with the Benedictine Monastery at St. Paul, in Carinthia, a contract of purchase entered into in 1926. Doctor Vollbehr—not by vocation a dealer in books, but a retired scientist, who, after an accident, had been exhorted to take up "collecting" as a diversion—had ambitions for the collection quite apart from considerations of profit to himself, although, like other collectors, a profit to himself through a sale of it was a warrantable expectation. He desired to see it remain in this country, the permanent possession of some research library, and preferably the Library of Congress. As time elapsed this latter disposition of it became almost an obsession with him, accentuated by his gift to us of two special collections (one of printers' marks, one of woodcuts) of great scope and practical value.



Representing as it did the investment of practically his entire fortune, the collection of incunabula could not be tendered as a gift. He conceived the idea, however, that some American citizen might contribute one-half the commercial value of it (which he then without the Bible reckoned at \$3,000,000); in which case he professed willingness to forego the remaining half.

For nearly two years, assisted by admirers of the collection, he sought such a citizen. By last autumn the quest had failed, and the collection was to return to Europe to be auctioned off. On December 3, 1929, however, Representative Collins, of Mississippi, introduced in Congress a bill for the acquisition of it through special appropriation, describing it, however, as consisting of 4,500 items (for he included 1,500 upon which Doctor Vollbehr had merely an option) plus the vellum copy of the Gutenberg, for which Doctor Vollbehr was under contract to pay a sum which, including interest, services, and export duty, would exceed \$300,000.

Incidentally, the bill proposed that when placed in the Library the collection should be known as the Herbert Putnam Collection of Incunabula.

Quite irrespective of the embarrassing compliment to me which I regarded as but a friendly gesture on the part of a legislator warmly interested in the Library, such a proposal caused me consternation. I feared its effect not merely upon my general repute with Congress for moderation but upon recommendations then pending, including the regular appropriation bills and a bill to authorize an expenditure of over \$6,000,000 for the construction of the Annex. I felt, therefore, obliged not merely to abstain from any advocacy of the measure but to keep entirely aloof from the discussion upon it, save to recognize the extraordinary interest of the material, to agree that the possession of it by the Library would greatly enhance its prestige and abilities, and to concede that the acquisition of it by Congress upon its own initiative would greatly impress the world of culture, and would favorably influence many a collector of rarities to choose the Library as the donee or legatee of them. This attitude I preserved until the passage of the bill by the House.

Mr. Collins persisted, and speedily brought to the support of his bill not merely a considerable interest among his colleagues but a "public opinion" expressed in the press and in numerous letters, not merely from people with passion for the rare and curious but from citizens at large whose sentiment and emotion seemed to be stirred by the prospect that our Congress might by its enactment demonstrate a sensibility to "things cultural" with which neither it nor our country is habitually credited.

The volume and intensity of this opinion was increased by a speech of Mr. Collins in the House on February 7, of which copies were widely diffused. On March 10 a hearing upon the bill was given by the Committee on the Library (to which it had been referred) at which numerous librarians, bibliographers, and other experts testified to the significance of the collection and of incunabula in general, and expressed enthusiasm for the acquisition. On June 4 the bill (revised, simplified, and omitting the reference to myself) was reported, but with-

out recommendation, and with a statement carefully balanced between appreciation of the merits of the collection and the perils in prospect through the initiation of what seemed a new policy in the expenditure of Government funds for projects purely "cultural." On June 9 the bill was, upon motion of the leader of the Republican majority (Representative Tilson), called up under suspension of the rules, and passed, with only incidental comment. On June 16 I appeared before the Senate committee in definite support of it, explaining my own earlier hesitations, a portion of which had been quieted by the enactment of the appropriation bill, and (on June 9) of the bill to provide for our annex building; and submitting my opinion that the failure of the Collins bill, especially if ascribed to the indifference of the Library Committee and the Librarian, would be a calamity.

On June 18 the committee reported on the bill with a favoring recommendation. On June 24 it was passed by unanimous consent.

Owing to the legislative congestion it was not, however, actually approved by the President until the final day of the session, July 3, on which day also the final deficiency bill became law, carrying the requisite appropriation.

The 3,000 items constituting the main collection being already in this country were susceptible of prompt delivery to us, subject only to release of certain claims against Doctor Vollbehr which constituted a lien upon them. By July 15 all were cleared and under our roof, awaiting only the check of them with his catalogue, already in our possession. The Gutenberg Bible was still at the Monastery of St. Paul (in Austria) awaiting payment by Doctor Vollbehr of the final installments of the purchase price (\$250,000) which, with interest since 1926, the export duty (\$25,000), and certain other charges amounted then to approximately \$325,000. A month later, with the aid (rendered through the American Legation at Vienna) of advances by the Library upon its own transaction with him, Doctor Vollbehr was enabled to free the three volumes from any further claim of the monastery, and on August 16 delivered them to the American minister, who accepted them in our behalf, later forwarding them by a special courier to our embassy in Paris whence in turn a special courier delivered them to me on the deck of the *Leviathan* at Cherbourg.

By the 3d of September they also were safely within the walls of the Library at Washington.

Putnam's claim to optimism and philosophy of assurance seemed thoroughly justified. Endowments were encouraged and gratefully received; new divisions were established; in 1931 positive action was taken to benefit the blind; chairs and consultantships were increased. Thus the eminent historian James Truslow Adams penned this tribute to the Library of Congress in his *Epilogue to The Epic of America*, published in 1931 (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co.):



*The foundation established by Gertrude Clarke Whittall (1867-1965) provides funds for chamber music concerts played on the Stradivari instruments she presented to the Library.*

Like the country roads, our whole national life is yet cluttered up with the disorderly remnants of our frontier experience, and all help should be given to those who are honestly trying to clean up either the one or the other. But the frontier also left us our American dream, which is being wrought out in many hearts and many institutions.

Among the latter I often think that the one which best exemplifies the dream is the greatest library in this land of libraries, the Library of Congress. . . .

The Library of Congress . . . has come straight from the heart of democracy, as it has been taken to it, and I here use it as a symbol of what democracy can accomplish on its own behalf. Many have made gifts to it, but it was created by ourselves through Congress, which has steadily and increasingly shown itself generous and understanding toward it. Founded and built by the people, it is for the people. Anyone who has used the great collections of Europe, with their restrictions and red tape and difficulty of access, praises God for American democracy when he enters the stacks of the Library of Congress.

But there is more to the Library of Congress for the American dream than merely the wise appropriation of public money. There is the public itself, in two of its aspects. The Library of Congress could not have become what it is to-day, with all the generous aid of Congress, without such a citizen as Dr. Herbert Putnam at the directing head of it. He and his staff have devoted their lives to making the four million and more books and pamphlets serve the public to a degree that cannot be approached by any similar great institution in the Old World. Then there is the public that uses these facilities. As one looks down on the general reading room, which alone contains ten thousand volumes which may be read without even the asking, one sees the seats filled with silent readers, old and young, rich and poor, black and white, the executive and the laborer, the general and the private, the noted scholar and the schoolboy, all reading at their own library provided by their own democracy. It has always seemed to me to be a perfect working out in a concrete example of the American dream—the means provided by the accumulated resources of the people themselves, a public intelligent enough to use them, and men of high distinction, themselves a part of the great democracy, devoting themselves to the good of the whole, unclioistered. (Mearns, *The Story up to Now*; pp. 217-18)

In 1935 a sprightly little lady, emulating but not imitating Mrs. Coolidge, approached the Librarian directly and offered a dazzling gift: two violins, a viola, and a violoncello, all made by Antonio Stradivari and each one accompanied by a bow crafted by François Tourte. They were promptly accepted, as were a third Stradivari violin and a fifth Tourte bow in the following year, plus an endowment to ensure their preservation, care, and use. The donor was Mrs. Gertrude Clarke Whittall (1867-1965), whose intense enthusiasm for chamber music led her to this splendid exercise in generosity. Indeed, she did far more. In 1937 she provided the means to construct the Whittall Pavilion as the permanent home of the Strads and from time to time augmented her endowment. Her benefactions continued long after Putnam's retirement and death, but they were initiated during his most fruitful administration. He had a way with donors, male or female, which was irresistible.

As his term in office was drawing to a close Putnam had still another occasion to prepare a room, designed for a specific purpose by Paul Cret. The Librarian announced it, in his annual report for 1938, in words that showed its provenance: "On the further wall of the reading space a tablet recognizes the contributory relation with its pros-



pective collection and service, of the Hispanic Society of America, through its President, Mr. Archer M. Huntington." This legend is engraved on the tablet:

The Hispanic Foundation  
In  
The Library of Congress  
This Center  
For the Pursuit of Studies  
In Spanish, Portuguese and Latin-American Culture  
Has Been Established  
With the Generous Cooperation of  
The Hispanic Society of America  
In Extension  
Of Its Service to Learning

And in his report Putnam added: "With its appropriate physical features and its remarkable collection (enhanced through the Huntington fund and by gifts and deposits from the Hispanic Society . . .) this room is certain not merely to serve important uses and to have wide distinction, but to exercise an important influence upon our diplomatic and cultural relations with the communities represented."

Having served nearly 40 years, with a brilliant record of accomplishment back of him, Putnam rejected an enticing proposal to write his autobiography. Mearns (in *Herbert Putnam, 1861-1955*; p. 91) quotes from Putnam's letter of November 18, 1938, to Col. Theodore Roosevelt of Doubleday, Doran & Co.: "I have kept no records; and I am not given to reminiscence, my habitual concern having been always of today or tomorrow rather than of yesterdays." The world is the poorer for this characteristic decision.

The 5th of April 1939 was approaching, and many realized the significance of that date. One eminent group, the American Council of Learned Societies, directed by Dr. Waldo Gifford Leland and then located in Washington, D.C., tendered Putnam a festive dinner on January 27 of that year. It presented to him a glowing statement hailing his achievement of 40 years and mentioning the fields of learning and culture into which he had guided the Library to preeminence. In acknowledging the tribute Putnam opened his appreciative remarks in this whimsical fashion:

I have been absorbed in the recital, awed by the amount of research it represents; but somewhat dizzy from the elevation to which it exalts me; and apprehensive. At such a height one's in danger of losing his

equilibrium—his sense of proportion between himself and his job, the job and the universe. There was, you remember, Theudas, who, according to Gamaliel [allegedly the teacher of the Apostle Paul; see Acts 5:34-36], "boasted that he was somebody"; and came a cropper.

On April 5 itself the Librarian's famous and exclusive Round Table proffered him a luncheon followed by a program at which a bronze bust of the Librarian, sculpted by Brenda Putnam, was unveiled. On this occasion, too, the following letter from the President of the United States was read:

The White House  
Washington

March 28, 1939.

My dear Dr. Putnam:

I wish it were possible for me to be with my friends of the "Round Table" on April fifth. But I expect to be away from Washington at that time. I do want, however, to congratulate you on the fortieth anniversary of your librarianship.

The completion of two score years of service in making the great resources of the Library of Congress serve the needs of the American people is an event of outstanding importance. Under your direction our national library has become one of the great libraries of the world.

I think Carlyle's saying that the true university is a collection of books is of greater force today than when the Sage of Chelsea uttered it. I have an unshaken conviction that democracy can never be undermined if we maintain our library resources and a national intelligence capable of utilizing them.

I believe the library has become universal in scope and national in service.

Very sincerely yours,  
[signed] Franklin D. Roosevelt

Dr. Herbert Putnam  
Librarian of Congress  
Washington, D.C.

That same day, April 5, 1939, marked the official opening of the Annex, so desperately needed and so valiantly struggled for by the soon-to-become Librarian Emeritus.

The fifth of April had come and gone, and Herbert Putnam was still Librarian of Congress, albeit unwillingly. Nearly a year earlier, on June 15, 1938, he had written to President Roosevelt: "I shall be prepared 'on or after July 1,' to turn over the administrative duties to my successor as Librarian, and to facilitate his entrance upon them." Five days later an act unique in the



Library's history was approved which provided "that upon separation from the service, by resignation or otherwise, on or after July 1, . . . Herbert Putnam, the present Librarian of Congress . . . shall become Librarian Emeritus, with such duties as the President of the United States may prescribe, and the President of the United States shall thereupon appoint his successor. . . ."

No action was taken, and on March 27, 1939, the Librarian again wrote to the President: "Under the appended act and my immediate assurances to you, my retirement to the office of Librarian Emeritus and the nomination of my successor as Librarian might have taken place on any date since last July. Your delay in proceeding under it has been a compliment which I have appreciated, as would any executive. On April fifth, however, I shall have completed forty years of my service here. If by then you are prepared to name my successor, my retirement and his nomination as of that date would seem especially appropriate and welcome." This prompted President Roosevelt, on March 28, to send the following reply: "I need not tell you that I have been glad to have you continue in such fine spirit in the office of Librarian. And I can understand your wish to become Librarian Emeritus after your historic years of service on April 5th. However, I cannot fill your place on that date—principally because it is such an extremely difficult place to fill. Therefore, I must leave it to your good judgment either to stay on for a month or two or to retire and let your first assistant carry on until such time as I can find your successor. I know you will understand." (*Herbert Putnam, 1861–1955*; pp. 91–92)

The President did not long delay his selection of a new Librarian. On June 7, 1939, he nominated Archibald MacLeish to that position, and the Senate confirmed him on June 29. Putnam officially became Librarian Emeritus of Congress on the first of October (Mearns, *The Story up to Now*, p. 219). He retained a private office in the Main Building, came to the Library daily, and generously gave sage advice and counsel to all who sought him out. The Library of Congress, now more than seven times as large as 40 years earlier, faced a completely new era.

The Librarian's annual report for 1939 offered the following statistical summary, estimated, of the institution's holdings:

Printed books and pamphlets	5,828,126
Maps and views	1,421,285
Music (volumes and pieces)	1,221,333
Prints (pieces)	548,622

No attempt was made to estimate the number of manuscripts in the Manuscripts Division. Perhaps it could only be guessed at. In quantity as well as quality Putnam's 40-year administration had been impressively productive.

Two more encomiums may fittingly be inserted here. On April 5, 1939, Justice Felix Frankfurter wrote to Putnam: "From the viewpoint of ultimate contribution to the enduring values of civilization, I know of no public servant who has contributed more during these last forty years than you have." And that same year Wilhelm Munthe, director of the University Library, Oslo, made this statement in *American Librarianship From a European Angle*: "To me the Library of Congress is like a giant orchestra, in which each member is a virtuoso or a specialist on his own peculiar instrument. In front of them stands that little musical enchanter who directs without the help of a baton—and under his spell they produce the world's most remarkable library symphony" (*American Librarianship* [1939; reprint ed., Hamden, Conn.: Shoe String Press, 1964], p. 95).

Putnam died on August 14, 1955, at Woods Hole, Mass., at the age of nearly 94. What a monument he left the nation!

The title of this little appreciation comes from an obituary written by Jens Christian Bay and published in *Libri*, vol. 6, no. 2, 1956. What kind of a person was this tallest little man in the world, a phrase which so appropriately contrasts his mental and spiritual height with his diminutive stature? I served under him for eight years, knew him only slightly, saw him infrequently. I knew him somewhat better as Librarian Emeritus than as Librarian. I revere and love his memory, and this affection increases with each passing year.

Let us turn to David C. Mearns (in *Herbert Putnam, 1861–1955*; p. 43 ff.) once more for some insight into Putnam as person.

By common assent Herbert Putnam was a Patrician. . . . Certainly there *was* a lofty, Olympian quality in his bearing. . . .

That he was subjected to an impenetrable dignity cannot be denied. He possessed no gifts for glib or sudden intimacy. He rarely gave or asked a confidence. He kept his own counsel. His emotions were indiscernible.

No associate ever called him by his given name. . . . The vulgarities of slang, he dismissed as "F Street" language. He was temperate in all things—passionately temperate and fastidious.

But it were foolish to think of him as being cold, and more foolish to think of him as seeking to promote that belief. . . .

Between the staff and Herbert Putnam, the Librarian of Congress intervened. It was due neither to indifference on the one hand, nor to diffidence on the other. It was the result of a carefully cultivated concept that the Library was invested with a composite personality of all the personalities who served it. . . . It is doubtful that he understood these forces, separating him from his subordinates. There was evidence of this at the observance of his thirtieth anniversary, April 5, 1929, when he composed an encyclical:

"The encomiums upon me personally [he wrote] went so far that, while accepting as one does, the sheer kindness of them in the spirit in which it was meant, I was obliged to protest an excess which I felt to be *rationally* inadmissible. It consisted, not in overpraise of the Library in what it has become, not in over-valuation of its aims, not even in a too-liberal appraisal of the services I have rendered—but in a disproportionate view of my function in relation to the Library as an organism.

"The protest was not made out of modesty . . . but because of my urgent concern that the personality to be considered significant is the personality of the institution itself, of which the personalities of the staff, including myself, are merely components.

"It is, I say, that embracing personality which is my main concern. It must, even more especially, be yours. For though I may attempt definitions of it, and from time to time secure resources for the freer realization of it, the actual development of it rests chiefly with you. The major task will be yours; and the *will* for it must be yours.

"And therefore, in sharing with you the commendations of these days, and the new zests which they inspire, let me ask you to give still freer exercise to those qualities in you without which, in spite of building, books, and apparatus, the Library will never express or fulfill its proper nature.

"And I ask it of you, not as subordinates, serving under me, but as associates, serving *abreast* of me."

There was no condescension, however unconscious, in this exhortation; it was addressed: "To my Immediate Family—All Six Hundred of You." On the contrary, there is every reason to believe that, on his own part, Herbert Putnam felt a sense of close kinship with his appointees. . . .

. . . He was venerated. He was endowed with extraordinary gifts. He was changeless and timeless. . . . His actions were sometimes inexplicable, incredible, inscrutable, but there was confidence in his wisdom, in his judgment, in his foresightedness.

He was stern. He exacted the highest standards of professional and personal conduct. . . . But he was not unjust, not easily provoked, not recklessly, impetuously, incensed. . . .

Of course, the staff's pride in him was inordinate: pride in his urbanity, suavity, courage, understanding, prescience. There was pride in his wit; in his intellectual gaiety and exuberance. . . . There was pride in his eloquence, his idiom, the faultless style of his compositions. . . . The Putnam legacy is a *wisp* of grandeur.

I cannot resist the temptation or impulse to relate the incident which permanently endeared Putnam to me. I had a glimpse of the man which few were privileged to receive. I cannot document the event of nearly 40 years ago, more's the pity, but I can vouch for its essential truthfulness and how happy it made me.

Easter Sunday of 1939 fell on April 9. On that day Marian Anderson sang to an uncounted multitude from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. It was a triumphant climax of right over prejudice, of justice over injustice.

Marian Anderson had been engaged to appear in Constitution Hall, the official headquarters of the Daughters of the American Revolution. However, her performance was canceled by the DAR. There was a hue and cry throughout the city and the country from those who appreciated her musical and artistic achievements and the significance of her efforts to obtain social equality for fellow members of her race, but the Daughters of the American Revolution stood by its decision. As soon as the cancellation was firmly announced, arrangements were made for Marian Anderson to sing elsewhere—at \$5 per ticket.

At that time Putnam called me to his office, handed me a \$20 bill, and instructed me to obtain four tickets for him. I took the money with the greatest pleasure and promised to execute his errand promptly. Fortunately for all concerned, the very next day it was announced that Marian Anderson would sing *free* in front of the Lincoln Memorial.

I returned the \$20 to Putnam immediately, but as I handed him the money I had to express my own deep pleasure and satisfaction in his desire to support Marian Anderson and to ally himself with the protest. His reply was brief and simple—how I wish I could remember his exact words. He said that he was highly indignant over the unfair stand taken by the Daughters of the American Revolution and he wished to participate in the only way he could to see that justice was done.

It was indeed a privilege to serve abreast of Herbert Putnam.

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## Some Recent Publications of the Library of Congress<sup>1</sup>

*A la Carte; Selected Papers on Maps and Atlases.* 1972. 232 p. \$6.85. Reprinted 1975. Compiled by Walter W. Ristow, Geography and Map Division. Most of the 20 papers appeared originally in the *Quarterly Journal*. Includes bibliographical references. Ample illustrated.

*The American Revolution in Drawings and Prints; a Checklist of 1765-1790 Graphics in the Library of Congress.* 1975. 127 p. \$14.35. The 921-item checklist was compiled by Donald H. Cresswell. Liberally illustrated, the book is divided into five sections covering portraits, events, views, cartoons and allegories, and weapons and implements.

*A Decent Respect to the Opinions of Mankind; Congressional State Papers 1774-1776.* 1975. 154 p. \$5.55. Compiled and edited by James H. Hutson, coordinator, American Revolution Bicentennial Office. Collects and annotates the series of papers which the Continental Congress issued to explain to the world the controversy between the American colonies and Great Britain.

*Folk Music in America*, vol. 1, *Religious Music; Congregational and Ceremonial*, and vol. 2, *Songs of Love, Courtship, and Marriage*. \$6.50 each. Edited by Richard K. Spottswood. The first two in a 15-record set. A project of the Library of Congress American Revolution

Bicentennial Program supported by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. For sale by the Music Division, Recorded Sound Section, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540.

*Our Musical Past; a Concert for Brass Band, Voice, and Piano.* 1976. \$10. A two-record set. Frederick Fennell, director; Merja Sargon, soprano; Bernard Rose, piano. An accompanying booklet by Jon Newsom, Music Division, provides extensive notes on the history of the music and the 19th-century instruments used in the concert. For sale by the Music Division, Recorded Sound Section, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540.

*Processing Department of the Library of Congress; Organization and Functions.* 1975. 40 p. Free from the Processing Department. A brief outline of the history, organization, and functions of the Library's largest department.

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## Publications for the Bicentennial of the American Revolution<sup>1</sup>

*The American Revolution: A Selected Reading List.* 1968. 38 p. 80 cents. Presents numerous approaches to the Revolution, ranging from eyewitness accounts by the men and women involved in the struggle for independence to recent scholarly evaluations.

*The Boston Massacre, 1770, engraved by Paul Revere.* Library of Congress Facsimile No. 4. \$2. A full-color facsimile of the famous engraving is presented in a red folder which forms a mat for the print. A description of the events leading to the massacre and to the production of the engraving appears on the folder. Produced through the Verner W. Clapp Publication Fund. For sale by the Information Office, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540.

*Creating Independence, 1763-1789; Background Reading for Young People.* 1972. 62 p. \$1.15. An annotated list of books on the Revolution, including general histories, biographies, and novels. Introduction by Richard B. Morris. Illustrations from contemporary sources.

*English Defenders of American Freedoms, 1774-1778.* 1972. 231 p. \$4.75. Six pamphlets attacking British policy after the North Ministry turned to coercion, written by Jonathan Shipley, Bishop of St. Asaph; John Cartwright; Matthew Robinson-Morris, Baron Rokeby; Catherine Macaulay; and Willoughby Bertie, Earl of Abingdon.

*Manuscript Sources in the Library of Congress for Research on the American Revolution.* 1975. 371 p. \$8.70. A guide to documents, including reproductions, in the Library pertaining to the period between 1763 and 1789. It is divided into domestic collections and foreign reproductions. For each collection a description of the materials and information about the principal figures are given.

*Periodical Literature on the American Revolution: Historical Research and Changing Interpretations, 1895-1970.* 1971. 93 p. \$1.30. A guide to essays and periodical literature on the Revolutionary era, listing more than 1,100 studies that have appeared in the last 75 years; includes subject and author indexes.

*To Set a Country Free.* 1975. 75 p. \$4.50. An account derived from an exhibition in the Library of Congress, commemorating the 200th anniversary of American independence and the 175th anniversary of the establishment of the Library. The essay on the events preceding and during the Revolution is richly illustrated with more than 100 reproductions, eight in full color, of manuscripts, maps, prints, and rare books, the great majority of which are in the Library's collections. Produced through the Verner W. Clapp Publication Fund. For sale by the Information Office, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540.

*Twelve Flags of the American Revolution.* 1974. 13 p. \$1.25. This catalog to accompany a Bicentennial exhibition depicts the flags in both black and white and color and gives notes on their origins and symbolism. Produced through the Verner W. Clapp Publication Fund. For sale by the Information Office, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540.

*Two Rebuses from the American Revolution.* Library of Congress Facsimiles No. 5-1 and 5-2. \$2.50. Two facsimiles, each approximately 10x14 inches and suitable for framing, of rebuses published by Matthew Darly, a London caricaturist, in 1778 as satiric comments on England's attempt to negotiate peace that year with the colonists. Translations of the rebuses and

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a note on the historical background are included on the folder. Produced through the Verner W. Clapp Publication Fund. For sale by the Information Office, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS SYMPOSIA  
ON THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

Symposia and publications made possible through a grant from the Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation. For sale by the Information Office, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540.

*The Development of a Revolutionary Mentality.* 1972. 158 p. \$3.50. Papers and commentaries presented at the first Library of Congress symposium on the American Revolution, held May 5 and 6, 1972. The participants are Richard B. Morris, Henry S. Com-

mager, Caroline Robbins, J. H. Plumb, Richard Bushman, Edmund S. Morgan, Pauline Maier, Jack P. Greene, Mary Beth Norton, and Esmond Wright.

*Fundamental Testaments of the American Revolution.* 1973. 120 p. \$3.50. Papers presented on May 10 and 11, 1973, at the second of five symposia. Introduction by Julian P. Boyd. Papers by Bernard Bailyn, Cecelia M. Kenyon, Merrill Jensen, Richard B. Morris, and James Russell Wiggins.

*Leadership in the American Revolution.* 1974. 135 p. \$4.50. Papers delivered at the third Library of Congress symposium on the American Revolution, May 9 and 10, 1974. Opening remarks by L. H. Butterfield and papers by Alfred H. Kelly, Marcus Cunliffe, Gordon S. Wood, Don Higginbotham, and Bruce Mazlish.

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*Editor's Note*  
Continued from page 75

Word save what you have wrote since I left them; what they can mean by it I am wholly at a Loss." Joseph Hewes' frustration is understandable when he is forced to write to James Iredell:

Capt. Gillis makes so short a stay here that I fear I shall not have it in my power to send any shoes by him. I have urged the shoemakers to get them done, but they had so many orders not completed when I applied, that I fear the ladies and yourself must wait till the next opportunity for them.

And one shares his satisfaction when, in a little over six weeks, he follows this message with another:

I have sent by Captain Hatch's Sloop Ten pair of Shoes for yourself and Six pair for Mrs. Iredell and Mrs. Dawson. I did intend to have sent double the number for the Ladies but could not prevail with the workman to get them ready in time. The demand for Womens Shoes is so great that the makers cannot complete half their Orders, when a Tradesman had made a thousand Promises and broke them all he has one Answer ready for every charge, Sir I have been under Arms in the Field.

Anyone plagued with indigestion responds to Silas Deane's preoccupation with the food set before him. He tells his wife of a trip to the "Jersies" and the fare offered by his host:

. . . We arrived at his Mansion on the brink of a Creek, & good Meadow. He most hospitably called up his wife who making no Apology fill'd her pan with Bacon & Eggs, put a Skillet of Chocolate on the Fire & prepared for Supper, while he made a Bowl of Toddy. Our Supper was of the above preparation with Cucum-

bers, Butter, & Cheese. I drank a Bowl of Chocolate while my delicate Citizen ply'd the Bacon & Eggs close, which I avoided, knowing by Experience the Effects on my head. We lodged together & in the morning (Sunday) had Coffee, Cucumbers, & Gammon, & Egg Rum all which Complaisance as well as hunger urged Us to partake of.

For the serious-minded the letters are even more rewarding. In reading the delegates' personal accounts of the problems before Congress, their assessments of General Washington's character and ability, their expectations of news from abroad, and their reactions to such war casualties as that of their valued and respected friend Joseph Warren at Bunker Hill, one becomes imperceptibly an active albeit silent participant in the struggle that took place 200 years ago.



This issue of the *QJ* reproduces letters written many years after the American Revolution by two Librarians of Congress. One by Ainsworth Spofford outlines the reasons for and against accepting the position of Assistant Librarian of Congress. Present-day librarians will probably boggle at some of his points in favor of acceptance: "No exhaustion of brain . . . A congenial intellectual occupation, keeping mind alert without severely taxing the powers. . . ." John Russell Young's letter was written when he was but 16 years old. Reading it, one begins to believe that Alger's stories of work and win, try and trust, luck and pluck had a closer relation to reality than our cynical generation has believed.

SLW









